William Phillips

SLEEP NO MORE

I had just awakened from one of those hot afternoon naps that leave you limp and surly, when the door bell rang insistently. It was probably a normal ring, but in my half paralyzed state it sounded like a call to action that I was unable to carry out. I was immediately torn between a desire not to be disturbed and a fear of missing something, however trivial or distasteful. I remembered those times when some bohemian acquaintance, whose whole being lay coiled in his tongue, would come to see me at some off moment, at seven in the morning, for example, before I had even had a chance to brush my teeth, and proceed to explain his latest theories about men, women, and history. But my terror of being caught with my guard down was offset by my inability to reject any experience outright; and I compromised with myself by peeking out of my window to see who the intruder was. In this way I was at least able to postpone the decision as to whether I should answer the bell or not.

I strained at the window for some time, until I saw a man emerge from the hallway downstairs. I backed away, with the quick movement of a lethargic animal, but I was soon at my post again, ostensibly watching his movements, yet acting as though I were the one being watched, or rather as though I were being pursued, and the problem was to conceal my presence with all the cunning at my command.

The man, whom I now saw, even from my perspective, to be tall and massive, went down to another entrance below the street level, obviously determined to get into the house. This puzzled me and only increased my fear of discovery, for the man was a stranger, and it surely was not normal for anyone but an intimate friend to be so intent on getting up to my apartment when obviously no one was at home. He might have been a salesman or Gallup pollster, but

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that would not explain his persistence. And I had already excluded the idea of his being a burglar, since his movements were so open and mine so furtive, but any doubt about this was finally dispelled when I saw him emerge from the lower entrance, which must have been locked, and once more walk up the steps leading to the main entrance. Clearly he wanted me. If his purposes were unfriendly, it would be more logical to conclude he was a kidnapper than a thief.

Again the door bell rang, more sharply than before. This time I answered it. I am not sure why I did, for nothing had really changed; but I suspect that I could not endure the disadvantage of of my not knowing who the man was while he certainly knew who I was—otherwise he would not be so eager to find me. By merely pressing the ticker I reversed the situation to my advantage, since I would now discover his identity whereas he already knew mine.

As I opened my apartment door and waited for his mounting tread to reach my landing, I suddenly remembered that I was wearing a bathrobe, which was hardly the proper attire for coping with a man so resolute and so worldly as to manage to see me when I was obviously not at home. Besides, my wearing a bathrobe right in the heart of the day, when everyone is supposed to be most wide-awake, could only make him all the more suspicious of me, as though it were not bad enough that I had already aroused his suspicions by failing to answer the doorbell the first time. But it was too late to do anything about it, and even if by some miracle I had been able to change quickly into more conventional clothes for this time of day, it would not have done any good, for by now my anxiety was so great and was bound to arouse so much suspicion that I might just as well have kept my bathrobe on.

There was nothing to do but try to brazen it out, perhaps to indicate by my manner, subtly of course, that I was surprised to find him prowling around at this hour when he might just as well be taking a siesta. Suddenly, however, while I was pondering my strategy, I was faced by a hulk of a man, well over six feet tall and professionally broad-shouldered, and whatever bravado I had been prepared to show disappeared in the face of the discrepancy between his towering figure and, at least by comparison, my pathetic one.

"Yes?" I said in a tone that turned out to be more polite than challenging.

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"Are you Mr. Miller, David Miller?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Do you know where I can find Miss Caruso, Mary Caruso?"

"She moved out last week. She used to live on the ground floor."

"Where is she now?"

"I don't know. I think she moved to California."

"Is Miss Caruso her real name?"

"So far as I know," I answered hesitantly.

I was staggered by the boldness of the question, and by its fabulous and thrilling implications. At the same time, I was somewhat relieved to discover that it was not I for whom he had been looking. I must confess, too, that I was excited by the prospect of being drawn into a hunt for a mysterious woman—on the side of the hunters.

But how could I be sure of my own position? Why was I singled out as a collaborator in this effort to track down Miss Caruso? It suddenly occurred to me that this man, who looked like a fugitive from some football team, had not given me any legitimate reason for putting himself on the trail of Miss Caruso, nor had he established his right to interrogate me. It so happens that I never liked Miss Caruso. She flaunted herself as a writer, and she struck me as a literary poseur who made up for her lack of talent by cultivating an eccentric and obnoxious personality. But the city is full of such people, and that could hardly be a reason for investigating her movements. I decided, therefore, that she must have moved out without paying some of her bills, and that the man before me was a bill collector. Even this conclusion, however, placed me in a dilemma, for while I did not especially admire people who skipped out on their bills, neither could I unequivocally place myself on the side of the bill collector.

Both of us had remained fixed on either side of the doorway, like two wrestlers waiting for an opening. Unable to bear the tension, I made the first move.

"Who are you," I snapped at him. "I cannot answer any questions unless I know who you are."

"Army Intelligence," he replied casually.

I could hardly conceal my awe and fascination. The magic

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word *Intelligence* carried me into a world of organized wit and deception where my own faculties of detection were being challenged.

"Do you have any credentials?" I asked cleverly.

He handed me a card, on top of which was printed in bold type ARMY INTELLIGENCE. I went through the motions of carefully examining both sides of the card. But the light was bad, and I was already more interested in the "case" itself than in such legalistic trivialities as credentials. To tell the truth, all I could make out on the card was some nondescript name, something like George Wilson, ostensibly the name of the bearer typed out on it, which simply made no impression on my memory. The rest of the card was just a blur of type. But, after all, what better proof could I have of the importance and mystery of his mission than the very indistinctness of his credentials.

I was ready for the interrogation.

"Won't you come in?" I said, leading him to a chair free-standing in the middle of my living room, that suggested the openness of a witness chair. I took a more secure seat against a wall, with a coffee table between us.

But it was I who immediately assumed the role of the witness, and I began to explain my strange midday dress.

"I work late into the night and often rest during the day," I said, casually pointing to my red bathrobe.

I had no sooner finished my apologetic description of my habits, than I realized it was bad strategy on my part to take a defensive attitude. The right note to strike was obviously to let Intelligence explain what it was up to.

I offered him a cigarette, lit one myself, and waited.

"How long have you known Miss Caruso?" he finally asked.

"I did not know her, that is, I had no relations with her other than the obvious neighborly exchanges, hello how are you. We merely lived in the same house, and I don't usually confuse friends with neighbors."

"How long has she lived in this house?"

"Oh, I don't know, three or four years I think. I've been living here only two years."

"Do you know her address in California?"

"No, but can't you get it from the Post Office?" I asked.

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He ignored my question and proceeded to one of his own.

"What was Miss Caruso's occupation?"

"She was some kind of writer, at least she called herself one, maybe a ghost writer or a publicity writer who dreamed of becoming the great American novelist."

At this point I recalled having seen mail addressed to Miss Caruso from some kind of writers' organization that sounded as though it were made up of writers who could not get published in any of the standard media, and by way of compensation put out little mimeographed bulletins displaying their unrecognized genius. I was about to inform my visitor of this fact, though I must confess I hesitated because I thought it would be very difficult to explain to Intelligence that it was quite normal for writers without any recognized talents to set up writers' organizations, to publish hand-made magazines, and generally to act in every way as though they really were writers. But I decided to make the effort, when it suddenly occurred to me that the representative of Intelligence should certainly have known the answers to the questions he was asking me. Surely Intelligence knew more than I did about Miss Caruso; and if there was a legitimate reason for investigating her, one could at the very least expect that her occupation and her places of residence would be known. Of course, my interrogator's ignorance could have been explained by assuming that the decision to investigate Miss Caruso was a purely arbitrary one on the part of Intelligence, made in the course of investigating some other person, and that it was no more interested in Miss Caruso, herself, than it was in me. But this was really too frightening an idea to entertain seriously, for in that case Intelligence might just as arbitrarily decide at some point to switch the investigation to me. Besides it was becoming clear that my effort to figure out for myself all the possibilities of the case, and thus usurp the very function of Intelligence, far from illuminating the situation for me had the effect only of making me more uneasy. The best thing to do, therefore, was to be direct and ask Intelligence why it was so ignorant of the most elementary facts in the case.

"I must interrupt at this point," I said, "to tell you, quite frankly, that I am baffled by your questions, which makes it difficult for me to cooperate with you, as I'm the kind of person who must know at all times just what it is I'm engaged in. I mean that I cannot

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understand why you should ask me what Miss Caruso does and where she now is or how long she has lived in this house, when you either know these things already or have better ways than I have of finding them out."

The man did not seem to be at all disturbed by my declaration, at least not in any way I could discern. As he sat opposite me, looking stolid and, at the same time, relaxed, he appeared to be completely impenetrable.

"These are routine questions," he said casually.

"You mean you want to see whether what I tell you about Miss Caruso tallies with what you already know?"

He looked amused.

I took a long pull on my cigarette, and, in the most sophisticated tone I could adopt, I continued: "I suppose that is the way Intelligence operates. It is not a one-man affair—a clever sleuth following all the clues and finally unmasking the guilty person, in the manner of the detective thrillers. Intelligence is a vast institution, with thousands of agents, spreading its net in all directions, carefully piling up evidence bit by bit, until the entire life of the criminal has become the property of Intelligence. At this point, and not a moment before, Intelligence closes in on the suspect, or rather the guilty one, for the procedure of Intelligence is really a scientific way of transforming a suspected person into a guilty one."

I was quite pleased with my grasp of the situation. Having accounted for his odd behavior, in a really fundamental way, I was ready to go on with the case.

The man looked at me quizzically. But I could not tell whether he was impressed or suspicious of my determination to get right to the heart of the matter. As befits Intelligence, he remained inscrutable. He must have thought, however, that he had sufficiently indulged my speculative talents, since he began to fire questions at me.

"Did Miss Caruso have many visitors?"

"No, not especially. In fact, I would say so far as I noticed she had very few people coming to see her. She occasionally made some remark about an editor coming to see her. But I assumed she was simply boasting."

"Did any person or people come to see her regularly?"

"Not that I noticed. The more I think of it, I can hardly recall

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anybody ever coming to see her. She seemed to have a neurotic antagonism to other people. She couldn't stand any noise."

"What kind of noise?"

"Oh, radio—other people's parties."

"How do you know this?"

"Neighbors would mention it to me. They all disliked her intensely. Once she threw hot water at some dogs frisking in front of her window. I guess she was really pathological."

Suddenly he shifted his direction.

"Tell me," he asked, "would you say Caruso was a foreign-sounding name?"

"I guess so. I never thought about it. You mean it's not an old American name."

"Was she a foreigner?"

I was puzzled not only by the question itself but by his motive in asking it.

"I suppose she was a second-generation American, like millions of other Americans."

My answer had a slight pitch of aggressiveness, or perhaps I should say defensiveness, for my own genealogical line falls far short of the Mayflower. But my inquisitor acted as though he were hot on the scent and pushed right on.

"Did Miss Caruso have a foreign accent?"

"No, not especially. She didn't have mid-Western or Harvard speech. You might say she had a New York accent, or rather inflection."

By this time, I had become disturbed by the turn the investigation had taken. The questions about her foreign origins were associated in my mind with the usual reactionary attacks on any variety of radicalism or liberalism. I would have no part of what is commonly known as a witch-hunt, though I must confess to a divided mind on the subject. The term witch-hunt implies that innocent people are being persecuted. Yet we know that many people under investigation are beyond doubt witches. And if anyone were to ask me whether I am against witches, what else could I say but that I am unequivocally opposed to them? Any other position would smack of what I might call psychopathic objectivity—the objectivity of a person who has no relation to the real world of angels, devils and witches.

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But how could I communicate all this to Intelligence, which is interested only in the evidence, and not in the metaphysical aspects of guilt and innocence, involving the accuser as much as the accused?

"Before we go any further," I said, "I must make clear to you that I am a liberal. Some people go so far as to call me a socialist, though I regard myself as being in a state of extreme conflict and disillusionment in my philosophical and political beliefs. Anyway, it is against my principles to collaborate with any inquisition directed against the legitimate left, I mean against people who honestly hold dissident opinions and are not the dupes of sinister organizations."

Intelligence looked at me diffidently, as though to say he did not understand the relevance of what I was saying.

"Let me put it this way," I went on to explain, "if Miss Caruso is really guilty of something more than being an obnoxious person and holding unpopular opinions, if, for example, she were a spy, then I would have no recourse but to answer your questions. What is the charge against her?"

"I cannot tell you that," he replied in a tone suggesting that I might have assumed he could not reveal the secret of his mission.

"Of course," I said, sympathetically, "to expose the nature of the investigation might actually jeopardize its success. You are only a cog in this huge machine that grinds out justice, and you cannot take any responsibility for it. You cannot divulge its hidden ways, much less judge them—perhaps you do not even know them."

From the response of my interrogator, who was beginning to look impatient and bored, it was clear that he had not the slightest interest in so abstract a view of what was, after all, probably just a job to him. To make my point, I had to take a different tack.

"What I mean," I went on, "is that I am opposed to arbitrary committees of three or five or seven, whether they be senators or congressmen, or merchants, set up to review the lives of other citizens. These committees tend to become instruments of reaction—and, besides, they are inefficient and not a little comic. On the other hand, we can perhaps assume that Intelligence is a more responsible and efficient body. If it has set out to investigate Miss Caruso, for example, it must have done so on the basis of certain facts that have come to its attention, and not for political or exhibitionistic reasons. Besides, Miss Caruso's guilt or innocence is in no way affected by my answer-

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ing purely factual questions about her everyday activities, which, on the face of it, might be eccentric or annoying, but are not necessarily incriminating."

"You can assume anything you please," countered Intelligence. "As for me, I can neither agree nor disagree with you."

I took this statement by my inquisitor as a guarded way of assuring me that his interrogation was strictly routine, and was not politically inspired. He was simply amassing all the facts in the case—and who could tell at this stage which trivial fact would later turn out to be most important? By this time I had begun to trust him a little more than when he first entered my apartment. Perhaps it was because he acted so consistently in character. Whether it was his personality or his job that impressed me most, I do not know. But I am inclined to think it was mainly the fact that there was no real distinction between the two.

During these moments when my own attitude toward Intelligence was on trial, I was tensed forward on my chair, more like a man watching a contest than one engaged in it. Now I sat back and lit a cigarette. The trained eye of Intelligence observed that I had, for the moment at least, exhausted my doubts, and he took up the investigation again.

"You say Miss Caruso did not see many people. Did she have any boy friends? Did any of them seem to be steady?"

"No—at least I never saw any men around her place. In fact, the rumor was that she was a lesbian."

I looked at Intelligence, wondering whether he knew what a lesbian was—and whether he disapproved. But he moved on, as though he had no brakes. Not that it disturbed me, for I was quickly learning the rules of the game; and I had, in fact, already concluded that any investigation would be lost if it permitted itself to linger over any one point.

"How did she make a living?" he asked challengingly.

"I don't know," I replied. My tone must have suggested that I was surprised by the question, itself. For the truth is that I rarely asked how a writer made a living. I somehow took for granted that many writers do not make a living, yet manage to live. To be sure, Miss Caruso's case was complicated by the fact that it was not at all certain, by the test of talent and achievement, she was really a

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writer. Nevertheless, her economic problems might be said to be typical of writers. I realized, however, that what I found natural, Intelligence would be bound to think suspicious. Above all, I did not want to see Miss Caruso incriminated by what, after all, is the guilt of all artists. On the other hand, suppose she actually were a foreign agent, who used her literary activities as a mask for her true profession. I had to move warily.

"It's a complicated question," I continued.

He interrupted me.

"Would you say she lived well? Was her apartment expensively furnished? Did she wear good clothes?" he asked.

"In a way," I replied, "she was not badly dressed. She lived comfortably, I might say. But it is hard to tell since she did not dress or live conventionally."

"Did she strike you as being poor?"

"Not in comparison with other writers."

He looked baffled.

"Let me explain it this way," I said. "You see writers are dedicated to their work. You might say they are obsessed—oh, like explorers, or saints, or witches. For the sake of their art, many of them are ready to forego—at least while they are young—the comforts and pleasures the average person devotes his life to obtaining. Don't misunderstand me. Not all writers are poor, or want to be poor. Some earn fabulous sums; the others envy and resent them. And the distinction between the two is not always as clear as it might be. For while successful writers are not necessarily the best ones, still it would be a mistake to equate talent with poverty. How do unpopular writers live? Well, in a thousand and one ways. Some teach, or do some kind of hack work, or have a private income, or marry a rich woman or man—or sponge. Others simply do not have any visible means of income, and are largely responsible for the general suspicion of writers."

I saw that I was boring him. What I was saying did not appear to be relevant, and therefore could not throw any light on the case. Nor was it sufficiently profound to arouse his interest by obscuring the case and adding to the air of mystery surrounding it.

"The question in your mind about Miss Caruso," I continued in an effort to be more specific, "is whether she made enough money as

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a writer, or had other, secret sources of income. If she were not a writer, or did not claim to be a writer, which amounts to the same thing, the answer would be simple. Since she does, however, claim to be a writer—and we know that the income of writers is itself hidden and mysterious—it seems to me you have to ignore the question of her earning power and proceed directly to the question of whether she was engaged in any secret activities, which is, anyway, the real question you are interested in. On the other hand, you must already have some direct evidence of underground activity, otherwise you would not be investigating Miss Caruso in the first place. The point is, that however you look at it, to speculate about her sources of income is a sheer waste of time."

I sat back and lit another cigarette, quite proud of being so intelligent and so useful to the investigation without violating a single moral or political principle. I could now even afford to play the host.

"Won't you have a drink?" I asked my guest.

"No, thanks." I detected a note of disdain in his refusal. I became uneasy again, for I had obviously misjudged and lost control of the situation. How stupid of me to expect that Intelligence would accept a drink in the middle of the afternoon, when he obviously looked with suspicion at the mere taking of a nap. The only thing for me to do was to wait meekly for his next question.

"What were Miss Caruso's political opinions?" he fired at me.

I was off balance again. We were back to politics, the very center of my doubt and confusion; and I was once again paralyzed by the fear of collaborating with any governmental investigation of radicalism. Again I was torn by the moral see-saw of weighing the reasons for and against cooperating. And they all kept revolving around the nature of Miss Caruso's guilt—did she simply hold dissident beliefs or was she a foreign agent—which was the one thing I did not know. Besides, the distinction between the two is often blurred by the sentimentality of the liberal tradition, of which I am in many ways a prisoner.

Trapped between my doubts and my scruples, I swung back and forth. The writers' association to which Miss Caruso belonged had all the earmarks of a radical organization. But even if I could not respect the achievement of its members, I certainly had to respect both their political and psychological right to convert their frustration

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into dissidence. On the other hand, I saw no reason why Miss Caruso should conceal either her membership in the organization or her dissidence, nor was I especially disposed to be an accomplice in her efforts to conceal her beliefs, when I was ready to champion her right to express them. Besides, what if all this were a blind, and she was actually engaged in, say, some form of espionage? And behind all these considerations hovered the spectre of the government, that ogre of the liberal mind, which, nevertheless, is the only real force that we can count on to protect both our right to investigate and to be free of investigation.

My interrogator was getting impatient. Not that he was ruffled; he simply looked at me with contempt, as he waited for me to light another cigarette and answer his question. But I could not be worried by his opinion of me, because I no longer knew what I thought of him. What disturbed me was his very presence in the room—the one thing I could do nothing about. I was in a state of frantic helplessness, as though I had been frightened out of a deep sleep.

I cannot say what pulled me out of my trance, but I suppose it might be said to be my tongue, for I suddenly found myself talking.

"I do not really know what Miss Caruso's politics are. My guess is that she is some kind of liberal or radical. No, it would probably be more accurate to describe her as a crackpot. She seemed to be anti-semitic."

As I said this I realized that at least part of my conflict came from the fact that I did not have a clear picture of Miss Caruso in my own mind. I remembered that it had always struck me as strange that a woman who paraded herself as a dissident literary personality should be an anti-semite, since anti-semitism is usually associated with reaction. And I now felt a little easier, for, perhaps, there was no longer any ground for my scruples about being drawn into the persecution of some innocent radical. True enough, another element of confusion had been added to the situation; but, after all, even philosophers, who cannot be said to be unintelligent, often clarify an old problem by introducing a new confusion.

I was now able to light my cigarette, while Intelligence pursued the new clue I had thrown out.

"How do you know she was anti-semitic?" he asked.

"Some of the neighbors, who hated her, told me."

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"She was a Catholic, wasn't she?"

"I don't know, but the rumor was that she was at least partly if not entirely Jewish."

"Why should a Jew or part-Jew be anti-semitic?

I was surprised and not a little shocked by the question. Could it be that Intelligence was taking a purely human interest in Miss Caruso, or the problem of anti-semitism, having nothing to do with the investigation?—in which case my confidence in the power and objectivity of Intelligence was bound to be shaken. If Intelligence were to stray into the affairs of the heart and the mind, it would become lost in the limitless possibilities of human error. Already, my inquisitor was betraying the ignorance of Intelligence in matters of belief and conscience, when he deviated by a hair's breadth from the strict line of inquiry. Nevertheless, I could find no principled reason for refusing to answer his question.

"It is a very complicated problem," I began hesitantly but with the security that comes from knowing there are no real consequences to what one says. "First of all, the anti-semitism of a Jew is something vastly different from the anti-semitism of a Gentile. Jewish anti-semitism arises out of insecurity, and expresses itself mostly in self-pity or self-hatred. A rabbit, for example, no matter how much it may despise and resent its own weakness, cannot be said to have the same attitude toward itself that, say, a dog has toward it. The anti-rabbitism of the rabbit is hardly the same thing as the anti-rabbitism of the dog."

"But isn't it confusing to call it anti-semitism?" he asked, with his unerring instinct for coming to the point.

"Not really, for the Jewish rabbit, out of extreme distaste for his precarious existence, sometimes tries to escape his birthright, and gives himself the airs of a dog. This is, of course, from the point of view of the rabbit, very dangerous, and can lead only to further persecution of the entire species. That is why it can be called a kind of anti-semitism."

"But how about the half-Jew?"

"That is simply a case of the racial tensions of society as a whole being contained within a single person. Have you ever noticed how the tiglon in the zoo, the offspring of a male tiger and a female lion, is uneasy and unsure of itself—one might say it is at war with itself

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instead of with the rest of the animal and human world. In the same way, one part of the half-Jew is suspicious and hostile to the other part. It is no accident that we speak of the half-Jew and never of the half-Gentile, which means that it is an unstable mixture. If it were a natural and casual combination, the terms half-Jew and half-Gentile would be interchangeable."

"Where does the anti-semitism come in?"

"Obviously both parts of the half-Jew are anti-semitic, but each one in a different way."

"Very strange," commented Intelligence, as though it were unbelievable, and certainly unprovable, rather than just odd.

Nevertheless, Intelligence seemed to be satisfied, for he indicated that the interrogation was over by a shrug and a covetous glance at his hat and coat which had been lying on a sofa near him.

"Thank you," he said, "for your helpfulness."

However, I could not see in what way I had been helpful. And I began to wonder again, as my original fear of the stranger returned, why he had sought me out in the first place.

"There is one question I would like to ask you," I said to him. "Why did you come to me for information about Miss Caruso?"

I guess I did not want to hear his reason, even if he had been disposed to reveal it. It made me more comfortable simply to assume that his presence in my apartment was a pure accident, one of those innumerable stabs in the dark made by Intelligence in its effort to throw light on the case. In situations like this one must always remember, I reassured myself, that Intelligence begins its investigations in complete ignorance, and that it does not arrive at any real knowledge until it has made a sufficient number of mistakes.

Without waiting, therefore, for his answer, I went on to ask another question.

"Have you seen Miss Johnson?"

"No. Who is she?"

I noted uneasily that he did not say "not yet," just plain "no."

"Miss Johnson lives on the second floor. She knows more than anyone else about Miss Caruso, more gossip anyway. You should also see Tom the superintendent. He hates her."

"Why does he hate her?"

"It would sound silly to you, but I might as well tell you the

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story. Miss Caruso claimed that Tom stole a pound of butter from her kitchen and she refused to let him have a key to her apartment."

"Doesn't the superintendent have to have a key to every tenant's apartment?"

"Yes, so far as I know."

"Has Tom ever stolen things from other apartments?"

"Not that I ever heard of. I would trust him."

"Thank you," he said again.

This time he rose to leave. I could have asked him many more questions, but I could no longer endure the ambiguous position I occupied between the accuser and the accused. From the point of view of Intelligence, every gesture, every breath of Miss Caruso was part of her essential guilt. But where did I stand? If my most innocent observations could so easily be converted into proofs of Miss Caruso's guilt, then I could no longer rest securely on my own innocence. I was guilty both of assuming the innocence of Intelligence and of failing to realize the guilt of Miss Caruso.

One is always saved by the amenities, however, and we shook hands while my towering inquisitor thanked me for the third time. As he hulked out the doorway of my apartment, I said to him nervously, fingering my red bathrobe, "I guess I'll get dressed."

No sooner had the door closed behind him than I rushed over to the window, to keep my eye on him as long as I could. He emerged from the house and walked down the street. As I watched him from my lookout, cleverly concealed behind a shade and ready to pull back at the slightest turn of his head, he grew smaller and smaller in the distance, finally losing himself in a blur of tiny shadows, as anonymous and mysterious as when he first rang my doorbell.

I have a remarkable way of forgetting what is uppermost in my mind and a few days passed without my once giving the entire incident a thought. One morning, however, I ran into Miss Johnson. She looked at me strangely, as though she knew something I knew but neither of us should talk about.

"Did a man from Army Intelligence come to see you," I asked,

"No."

"About Miss Caruso. He wanted to find out something about her."

"No. I don't know anything about it."

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She seemed properly bewildered and there was no apparent reason for believing she had lied to me. At the same time, knowing of her active dislike of Miss Caruso, I was a little suspicious of her lack of interest in what must have been a sensational bit of news to her about Miss Caruso. Could it be, as I had feared from the beginning, that I alone was sought out by Intelligence. I determined to find Tom, the superintendent. That is not as easy as it might seem to be, for Tom spends most of his time hiding from the tenants of the buildings under his care. Nevertheless, after several hours of combing systematically every hallway and alley in the neighborhood, I found Tom explaining to some large woman that cold water is better than no water at all. I pried him away from her, with very little difficulty, and asked him whether Army Intelligence had talked to him. He, too, appeared surprised and said nobody had approached him. I could no longer escape the conclusion that the finger of Intelligence pointed at me, and only me. I tried to reassure myself by reflecting that even Intelligence would find it difficult to find Tom, and that Tom's indifference could be explained by the fact that he was interested in nothing but his job, which was to avoid as much work as possible. But I could no more allay my suspicions in this way, than a sick man can remove his anxieties by noting the diseases of other people.

I determined to get to the heart of the matter by going directly to Army Intelligence. Everybody knows that it is much easier for Intelligence to find someone it is looking for, difficult though that may be, than for anyone to find Intelligence. Still I had no idea of the bureaucratic labyrinths one had to go through merely to locate it and to find a person with sufficient authority to listen to my story. First of all, and this was perhaps the greatest shock, I discovered that there is no such thing as Army Intelligence. Or, to put it more concretely, Army Intelligence may exist in the abstract, but it does not have either an address or a phone number. In its place are a number of fluid agencies in a constant state of organization, all on the verge of dissolving into each other, yet knowing nothing of each other's activities.

I called one office after another, repeating my story to anyone who answered the phone. It was always the same answer, which is really remarkable when you consider that none of the offices had anything to do with each other: had they given me the same infor-

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mation it would not have been so surprising, but what they imparted to me was an identical kind of ignorance. There was never anyone in authority available; they probably had no jurisdiction over the zone in which I lived; they were pretty sure they had never heard of Miss Caruso, and, besides, even though they did not know exactly what they were doing at the moment, it was strictly confidential. My own stupidity, of course, contributed to the general confusion, since I could not remember the name of the man who presented himself to me as an agent of Intelligence; but I was able to describe his appearance and I did know the nature of his mission.

Finally, after forcing my way by means of countless phone calls through a maze of switchboards and secretaries, I found myself talking to a Colonel McCallister, who was at least willing to assume that my experience fell into the domain of his responsibility.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Just a private citizen. I would like to check on an Intelligence Agent who came to see me the other day. He acted rather strangely and I am a little disturbed. I should imagine, however, that you would be even more interested than I am in getting to the bottom of the whole thing."

I recited my story once more, down to the last detail. To avoid boring him, I made sure to point out the many contradictions in the behavior of the agent, which now loomed even larger than they did at the time, especially the fact that he never followed up the clues I had given him.

"Yes," he said, "it does sound peculiar. What was his name?"

"I'm sorry I did not catch it. It was something like George Wilson."

"We have no agent with a name anything like that," he said, as he apparently thumbed quickly through a list at his side.

"Are you investigating a Miss Caruso?"

"No. I'm pretty sure not. I would have heard of it if we were. Could you describe the credentials he showed you?"

I began to describe the blurred image of the card as carefully as I could.

He interrupted me. "The credentials seem phony," he said. "None of our agencies use cards of that type."

"Then the man is an impostor."

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"Yes, it happens occasionally that someone pretends to be one of our agents. From your description, the man sounds like somebody who has recently been going around posing as an Intelligence Agent."

"Why should he do that?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know—for a variety of reasons," he answered.

"Don't you care? It must interfere with your work. Isn't it possible, also, that he might be an enemy agent?"

"Yes," he replied, after a moment's deliberation. "I guess so. But there is very little we can do about it."

"Is there anything else I can do? You know I would like to find out why this impostor chose me as his victim," I asked.

"I'm afraid not, unless he should come to see you again, which is very unlikely. If he does, you should find some pretext to get to the phone and call me immediately."

"Thank you," I said, and hung up, resigned to my own helplessness.

I put on my red bathrobe, lit a cigarette, and sat back to think things over. This is a habit I have cultivated to escape from my feelings when they become too painful, and I sometimes find it more relaxing than a nap. The truth is I am rather proud of having a philosophical mind, and I like to uncover the universals and absolutes that lie behind our experience. Before long I was boldly speculating about the deepest mysteries of life and death. I thought of everything that happens to us, and our helplessness before all that is dark and uncertain. But I found myself constantly returning to the image of the man who had barged in on me one sleepy afternoon, played the part of Intelligence, then disappeared, leaving no trace of himself and no impression on anyone but me. Who was he?

If he was not an agent, why did he choose to question me? Of course, he might just have stumbled on me—but why me? And how did Miss Caruso fit in? Besides, I had only the assurance of Colonel McCallister that he was an impostor. And what if Colonel McCallister were mistaken? Perhaps my visitor represented some other branch of Intelligence, which Colonel McCallister knew nothing about, and therefore, resented. Colonel McCallister must have noticed how agitated I was, and, like many other good men, he might have been expressing his resentment of a rival agency by pacifying me. In fact,

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I have been told that the right hand of Intelligence often does not know what the left hand is doing, and that the relation between the two is not all it should be. But why, then, did the left hand of Intelligence pick on me?

The only reasonable explanation I could think of was that I was just a cog in the machine of justice, and, like thousands of other cogs, my usefulness could be determined only in the course of investigation. This explanation had a certain attractiveness, I must admit, for it made everything I could not understand appear at least to be consistent. Still, the idea of my being a cog failed to satisfy me, since it reduced my importance without actually making clear what my role was. Besides, when you get right down to it, what is a cog? On investigation a cog turns out to be a writer, or a doctor, or a politician, with a history and a face, about whom people speculate and gossip. He is the eternal stranger who exists partly in his own right and partly as an image in the eyes of the world.

Suppose my visitor had rung Miss Caruso's bell and questioned her about me—a preposterous idea, of course, but the very thought of it made me uneasy. No doubt, she would have described me as a writer with strange habits, such as sleeping in the afternoon, prowling around at night, and going out at frequent intervals, ostensibly to get a newspaper—and why anyone, least of all a writer, should read or even buy ten papers a day, she would have no idea. She would certainly have told him that I seemed to have a divided personality, for sometimes I would dress quite carelessly, almost like a bohemian, while at other times my clothes would be suspiciously respectable. As for my politics, the rumor is that I was once a radical, and, with a touch of malice, she would add that no one had been able to figure out just what my beliefs were now, though she had observed—not that it means anything—many foreigners coming to see me. Then, too, there would have been a few innuendos about my character, which I cannot even imagine, though I suppose she must have noticed that I love arguments, especially when they lead nowhere, hate jokes and long-winded stories, and that I become nervous when I find myself in agreement with more than three people. Nor could she have failed to observe that pretentious women make me uncomfortable. For all I know, Miss Caruso may have thought me arrogant, or boring, or anti-feminist.

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I became very tired and went into my bedroom to take a nap. But I could not sleep. And as I lay awake, in the twilight of the afternoon, I kept asking myself over and over again, how a man who may or may not be guilty of being an impostor could stir up so much guilt in me over the question of whether Miss Caruso was guilty or innocent of a charge that had never been made. If I could only sleep, I thought, then I could exile my guilt to my dreams, like everyone else.

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Sidney Hook

ON THE BATTLEFIELD OF PHILOSOPHY

Nothing so typifies the cultural mood of Western Europe as the two world councils—one of religion and one of philosophy—held at Amsterdam, Holland, last summer. The first was tremendously publicized as "the greatest church meeting since the Reformation," the second was virtually ignored by the world press. The proceedings of both threw into dramatic relief the nervous timidity and calculated ambiguities of large and representative sections of European intellectuals in approaching the concrete issues of our time. These intellectuals, for all their talk about "the dignity of man" and "the spirit of human freedom," persistently refused to "engage themselves" in any cultural action which might bring them into open opposition to Communist totalitarianism. Ideologically disarmed by their fears of future reprisal in the event of the Red Army surging across Europe, a great many intellectuals on the Continent, although not Communists themselves, are in effect accomplices of Stalinism in the present struggle for the soul of the West.

Although it is well known that the World Council of Protestant Churches adopted a report calling upon the Christian world "to reject the ideologies of Communism and laissez-faire capitalism," the implications and circumstances of this call have not been sufficiently noted. What is the ideology of "laissez-faire capitalism"? Is it the philosophy of liberalism and democracy, of Jefferson and Condorcet? The Declaration of Independence and the French Rights of Man? This particular report was not merely concerned with questions of economic organization. Other pronouncements indicated that the Protestant Churches, and not only at Amsterdam, were in the main sympathetic to some form of New Dealism or mixed economy. The objective referents of "laissez-faire capitalism" and "Communism"

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were not merely, or even in the first place, the legal relations of production but encompassing *ways of life*—a complex of social institutions, values and practices which defines the culture of France, England and the United States, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union and its satellites on the other.

That economic organization was not the issue was apparent in the fact that originally the report condemned both "capitalism" and "communism," and that nowhere in heaven or earth can a "laissez-faire" economy be found. But to draw an explicit equation between the regime of total cultural terror in the Soviet Union and the imperfect democracies of the West was too preposterous, even though Niebuhrian theology—we are all infected with imperialist pride and sinful absolutism!—seemed to justify it to careless minds devoid of Niebuhr's own political realism. That is why at the insistence of some American delegates the words of the original formulation were altered. The substance, however, remained the same. Fearful of condemning Stalinist terrorism and of speaking out *openly* against the greatest menace to freedom of conscience in the world, something equally reprehensible had to be found to give the impression of even-handed balance, of being above partisanship in the current death-struggle of the free mind in Europe. And so the miserable evasion was adopted of inserting the word "laissez-faire" before capitalism in the hope that no one would notice that Adam Smith believed in other freedoms besides the freedom to invest, among them freedom of conscience, and freedom to criticize and abridge the unlimited freedom of investment.

The evils of capitalism are indeed many and great. And there is no reason to be silent about them because other evils are at the moment greater and more numerous. But to conclude from this that Truman and what he represents is as bad as Stalin, or that the Marshall Plan is on all fours with the Cominform—which is the actual political import of this resolution—is just as much the mark of political cretinism as to conclude that Roosevelt's America was as bad as Hitler's Germany. This is precisely the line of strategy worked out by Communists to immobilize those apprehensive European intellectuals who are waiting to see which way the Kremlin will move. It obscures the elementary truth that what divides the world today is not the issue of capitalism or socialism but the issue of political

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freedom versus despotism. Socialist Britain as well as other semi-socialist nations in Europe are threatened far more by the Soviet Union than by the United States. Genuine socialism, even more than capitalism, requires democracy.

The presence of a handful of delegates from Soviet satellite countries, headed by J. L. Hromadka, Professor of Theology at Charles University, Prague, was another factor which induced the men of God at Amsterdam to adopt this report pledging themselves, in effect if not in words, to steer a straight course between cultural tolerance and intolerance, between societies with a functioning Bill of Rights and those with concentration camps and an omnipotent secret police. It was construed as in part a gesture of conciliation. The Council heard Hromadka's attack on the West with respectful attention. It was a slick Agit-prop speech, flavored with piety, admitting some Communist mistakes only to dismiss them as unimportant. Its main point was to portray the minority Communist Party dictatorships in the Eastern Countries as spontaneous, democratic mass movements of the overwhelming majority of the population.

Hromadka was gently treated lest he and his friends be alienated. And yet it was common knowledge that Hromadka was one of the leading members of the Communist Action Committee which ruthlessly purged the faculty and the student body of Charles University last March. Even as he spoke the "uncooperative professors" in all the arts and sciences were being dismissed, and the leaders of the "unreliable students" were being dragged off to jail. In countries like Bulgaria, Roumania and Hungary, Hromadka's friends had already proceeded to the stage of executions. But no one called Hromadka to account. Everyone seemed grateful for his presence and felt he deserved some concessions.

It should be noted, however, that the Council adopted a statement in behalf of freedom of religious belief and worship, an act which is all the more significant because of what transpired at the Congress of philosophers.

II

Since the sessions of the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy were hardly noticed, except for isolated episodes, and since the few accounts that have until now been given are fragmentary

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and inaccurate, I shall report its deliberations at some length. Even those who are not professional philosophers should find its proceedings instructive.

The Tenth International Congress of Philosophy was the first meeting of the world's philosophers convened since the Second World War. It was eagerly awaited. Never was there a more auspicious moment for philosophers, the traditional lovers of wisdom, to pronounce a "saving word," to express a new vision, to effect a fundamental clarification of ideas.

More than seven hundred philosophers from twenty-five countries attended. The theme-song of the Congress had been bravely announced as "Man, Mankind and Humanity," and some of the sessions were held under the joint auspices of the Congress and Unesco. It seemed as if philosophers were to return to the great problems of human experience which had been lost sight of in the special pursuits of the profession. Few were the philosophers who had not heard the complaint that when men asked them for wisdom, they gave them the history of other men's opinions about wisdom, when they asked for truth, they gave them a diet of methods of finding the truth, when they approached heavily laden with doubts and problems, they sought to lighten their burdens by changing their habits of speech.

The Congress opened on a dramatic and promising note. The convocation speech paid honor to Dr. Leo Polok, the eminent Dutch jurist who had originally been scheduled to be the Presiding Officer of the Congress when it was first planned. When the Nazis invaded Holland he refused to flee; because he came under their barbaric Aryan laws and because he aggravated this offense by protesting against their actions, they sent him to a concentration camp where he died as a result of the treatment he received there. In invoking the spirit of Dr. Polok there seemed to be an implied promise that the Congress would reckon with those forces in the world which were responsible for his martyrdom and for the death of free thought in many countries.

At the end of eight days of deliberations and discussions, it became overwhelmingly evident that far from contributing to the solutions of any of the problems of men, the Congress reflected the same crisis of values, the same conflicts of ideas and feelings which

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gripped the rest of the world. With a few exceptions, the philosophers had come to tell the philosophers of other countries what for years they had been telling the philosophers of their own countries. The organizers of the Congress had indeed talked about the problems of men. The President of the Congress, Professor Pos, in his opening address had proclaimed the necessity of a new era of philosophy, a scientific this-worldly approach to living problems. As the congress developed, however, the participants shied nervously away—and particularly Professor Pos— from any issue which required the Congress to take a position. And they did their best to blanket discussion of the overriding problem of our age and culture—the nature of political freedom and of the threats to its existence. The hosts of the Congress, however, had planned without their guests from the other sides of the Iron Curtain.

Here was a striking manifestation of what Hegel would have called the power of the *Zeitgeist*. Most of the participants conceived the role of the philosopher as a spectator of all time and existence. Philosophy for them was a contemplative musing on human destiny, bound, if at all, only by the limitations of nature, not of history. Few of them were interested even in the Aristotelian conception of politics as the institutional basis of the good life. The metaphysics of time concerned them more than its urgencies. But none the less they were caught up by the great social and political forces of our time. Here and there isolated papers were read of genuine intellectual distinction, especially in the field of logic and the philosophy of science. In private conversation, however, few of the participants concealed their feeling that the proceedings were mostly tedious in the extreme. The Congress came to life only on the few occasions when the central issues of the day were raised.

The world has a way of breaking down the doors we lock against it. And in this instance the world of social and political struggle broke down not only the protective doors of doctrine but also the door of organization.

The Congress called itself international; in fact, it was predominantly European. Two delegates appeared from Asia via the United States, and two from South America. Nor was even the whole of Europe represented. The Soviet Union had been cordially invited to send its philosophers. The request was repeated several times but

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each time the Congress was rebuffed with the plain implication that its sessions were part of a political conspiracy of the West. The philosophers of Poland, among whom some of the greatest logicians of the world are numbered, were also invited. They accepted but at the last moment the Polish government refused them permission to attend. The Czech philosophers were invited. They arrived in force, carefully selected and purged, with Arnost Kolman, late of Moscow, as whip of the delegation which included for purposes of showcase demonstration one political sympathizer who was not a dialectical materialist. Communist philosophers from Hungary, Italy and other countries were on hand.

To compensate for the absence of Soviet philosophers, the organizers of the Conference quite properly made very liberal provision for thinkers of the same political persuasion to present their point of view on the program. The same forethought was not in evidence in regard to other aspects of the program. The sole American scheduled to read a paper before the plenary sessions of the Congress was someone none of the American philosophers had ever heard of. They learned subsequently that he was an historian from the University of Atlanta. John Dewey's vigorous paper, read in his absence, was relegated to one of the sub-sessions of the Unesco panel. Whatever the extenuating circumstances, and there are probably many, the Congress was poorly organized.

The Communist philosophers, like good soldiers, did their duty and rudely awakened the philosophers present to the kind of world they were living in. Some pretended not to notice. And the organizers of the Congress were so eager for harmony, so desirous of having a successful conference—by which they meant a polite and peaceful rather than a stormy one—that they made no effort, except at one session, to balance the program in such a way that crusaders against the "decadent bourgeois culture of the West" could be properly answered. Indeed, so anxious was the President of the Congress, Professor Pos, to avoid any appearance of having something said or done at the Congress offensive to the Soviet Union and its satellite powers, that he intervened to prevent effective reply to the fantastic political attacks which the Communist philosophers directed against the Western powers. At one of the plenary sessions, he angrily interrupted a fellow-Dutchman, Justus Meyer of Bloemendaal, who had mildly

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observed that to the extent that it followed philosophical dogmas the Soviet government was really conservative. "This is a congress of philosophy, not of politics," he declared. To those who had heard Messrs. Kolman, Rieger, and Banfi and others, this was extremely puzzling.*

Much more serious was the attitude revealed by the official delegates authorized to speak for their national philosophical societies towards the resolution introduced at the executive session of the Congress. This resolution, in behalf of the principle of freedom of inquiry in philosophy, seemed innocuous enough. It proclaimed that the vitality and growth of philosophy depended upon free circulation of ideas. It deplored the imposition of any extra-philosophical pressures anywhere throughout the world against philosophers in quest of the truth. It called upon the Congress to affirm its belief in the right to teach and learn, and its conviction that valid philosophical conclusions could be won only through argument and evidence. What it said was no more than that philosophy was not a matter for the police.

Resolutions of this kind have been standard procedure at national and international Congresses since the rise of Hitlerism. Congresses of scientists often adopt similar resolutions on freedom of scientific inquiry. To the astonishment of the accredited delegates, the reception which greeted this innocent expression of philosophic faith precipitated one of the stormiest discussions of the Congress. It was as if the chaplain's invocation, which opens so many official meetings, had become the subject of furious debate. Professor Pos, without even leaving the chair, violently denounced the resolution. "If this resolution is adopted," he declared with angry vehemence, "it will spoil the Congress." Some of his words gave the impression that rather than present it to the final public meeting of the Congress, he would resign. He was supported, rather shamefacedly, in his opposition by those who represented philosophical societies in France and Belgium. The philosophers from England, Argentina, Switzer-

* Since the above was written I have received word that Professor Pos has become an eloquent defender before Dutch audiences of the resolutions adopted at the Communist World Congress of Intellectuals at Wroclaw-Breslau, Poland. I am not surprised. It explains the political tendentiousness he displayed at the Amsterdam Congress and his failure to distinguish between his function as an objective Chairman of the Congress and his personal privilege as a member.

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land, by a not so strange coincidence countries outside of the shadow of the Soviet Union, supported the resolution. The delegates of the satellite countries did not attend this session (except for Dr. Rieger of Czechoslovakia who slipped out before discussion on the resolution was opened.) As speaker followed speaker it was instructive to observe how closely the geographical division paralleled the contemporary political scene. Representatives of the philosophical societies of those countries which lay directly in the path of the Red Army in the event of war in Europe displayed the most exaggerated sensitivity towards any possible action on the part of the Congress which might be construed as provocative by the countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Not that they were altogether aware of the connection. Personally, they assured the delegates that they were all in favor of freedom of philosophical inquiry—and they undoubtedly were. Some had even suffered for exercising it. But they insisted that it was not the sort of thing that fell within the proper concern of an International Congress. To make the international picture complete, the representatives of Unesco tried to reconcile the two points of view by finding an agreeable formula which could be interpreted as one desired.

Nothing revealed so glaringly the political motivation of the opposition to the resolution as the arguments advanced against it. First it was asserted that such a resolution was really a "tautology," on the strange ground that all countries, totalitarian as well as democratic, would support it. Why, then, oppose it? The argument then shifted and it was alleged that support of the "tautology" was an obvious political provocation to satellite Communist regimes. Why it would be considered a "provocation"—no countries were mentioned by name—was not indicated. As well say that to declare publicly one's belief in civil rights of any kind is a "provocation" to those who do not practice them. A little more sophisticated was the argument that a Congress of philosophers should not take a stand on any issue concerning which philosophers might disagree and it was theoretically possible that some philosophers should make a philosophy of the denial of freedom of philosophical inquiry.

Finally, in one of the most miserable arguments ever produced by a philosopher, Professor Pos contended that there was no point in approving a resolution in behalf of freedom of thought because thought "by its very nature" was free. No one could prevent a person

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from thinking since it was natural to man. This was comparable to saying that it was pointless for a man to demand air if he were deprived of it because breathing "by its very nature" was free. A little more than a century ago Metternich, the architect of the Holy Alliance, had cynically denied with a similar argument that his severe censorship decrees restricted freedom of thought in any way. When it was pointed out to Professor Pos that the question was not whether man thinks by nature but rather whether governments should be permitted to control the *expression* of thought by police methods, he retorted, "If a philosopher is not allowed by a government to think freely, he should leave the country." He did not indicate what a philosopher should do if he were prevented from leaving the country.

One of the most dramatic moments in the discussion was the impassioned speech of the Catholic philosopher and logician, Father Bochenski of Switzerland, in support of the resolution. It followed hard upon the eloquent remarks of Professor Frondizi, the philosophic exile from Argentina, who urged the meeting to adopt the resolution because in his country no philosopher could hold a university post who did not subscribe to the Thomist philosophy. To my surprise I discovered that some of the clerical philosophers at the Congress, deriving from orders not conspicuous for their defense of philosophic freedom in previous centuries, were among the strongest advocates of the resolution. Indeed, throughout the Congress, on every issue which involved intellectual and political freedom, these philosophical priests lined up solidly with the democratic forces. One sensed that their experience in the various resistance movements combined with their defensive position on the Continent, so different from their position in the United States, had produced a new awareness of the dangers of authoritarian institutional controls to the integrity of the philosophical life.

The discussion resulted in a compromise amending with a few ambiguous words the draft constitution of the new International Federation of Philosophical Societies. One of the aims of the Federation is "to help develop an exchange of views and scientific relations among philosophers of all countries." To this was added *"in a spirit of liberty and reciprocal respect."* Those who opposed the resolution supported the amendment with enthusiasm and explained in a bewildering *volte face* that "it really meant the same thing." They

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did not explain why the arguments which they levelled against the resolution were not equally valid against the amending phrase if the latter meant the same thing. The truth is, of course, that it did not mean the same thing. It meant nothing at all.

The discussion of the resolution transcended in importance anything else that came out of the Congress. For it threw a glaring light upon the present role of philosophy in the world, how the philosophers themselves conceived of that role, and the dangers which threaten the community of philosophical tradition in the West.

Throughout many countries of the world today philosophy is not free. Some philosophers are in exile, others are in concentration camps, many more are on starvation-rations for no reason save that their philosophical views are unacceptable to the police regimes under which they live. Here was a gathering of the world's distinguished philosophers, capable of commanding a universal hearing. Despite their professed contempt for public opinion, sometimes dictatorial governments are sensitive to it.* The cumulative intellectual authority of the philosophers assembled at Amsterdam was enormous. By a forthright and principled stand they could have made new purges in philosophy more difficult. But the opportunity was lost. It is unlikely that it will arise again in the near future.

III

No general summary of the philosophical discussions at the Congress would do justice to the variety of the themes presented, defended and criticized. But there were several basic related issues around which the different philosophical positions crystallized. These were the conception of philosophy, the nature of man, the status of human value, the definition of reason, and the form of the good society.

The subject matter of philosophy is something about which philosophers themselves have notoriously been at odds. Is there any knowledge which philosophy possesses about the universe and man's place in it that marks it off from the knowledge natural and social scientists give us? One group of philosophers, rather weakly repre-

* This is revealed in the response of the Argentinian government to the resolution adopted by the American Philosophical Association (Eastern Division) on conditions of intellectual life in Argentina. Cf. N. Y. *Times,* 2/2/49 and *Christian Science Monitor,* 2/5/49.

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sented at this Congress, affirms that reliable knowledge about the world can be won only through the special sciences, and, that aside from concern with questions of pure logic, the activity of philosophy is exhausted in refining the methods, results and language of the sciences, a procedure often enabling us to show that many philosophical problems arise merely from linguistic confusion. Most of the philosophers present, however, were more sympathetic to the Socratic view that philosophy is a quest for wisdom. Some felt that the wisdom of the past was still adequate for our predicaments of the present if only it were properly applied—which no one attempted to do. But the great majority agreed with John Dewey's vigorous paper arguing that reliable wisdom could be found only by grappling directly with the problems of human life and culture in present-day society, and developing the leading ideas which would resolve the conflicts of values and traditions defining the crisis of our time. At this point the agreement ended. One school maintained that such wisdom could not be won without relating man to some cosmic order of things whose character could be discovered by metaphysical analysis; the other school held that insofar as wisdom was knowledge of the values around which human life and society could best be organized, no other resource was open to us except the use of scientific method in its widest sense.

This raised in a focal way the question of the nature of man. It would hardly be too much to say that all the philosophers present regarded themselves as "humanists," but it was startling to observe how great the differences were among the humanists. The first great division was between those conceiving of human existence as a mode of natural and historical existence, with resources sufficient to build a significant and dignified life, and those contending that man was more than a natural being, and that true humanism must recognize some divine order in which men have their origin and end. Among the humanists who saw in man a creature of more than one world were not only the orthodox Christian supernaturalists but also Platonists, like Madame Vial of France, who argued that human life is fundamentally made up of the experiences of absence, absence of order, absence of ideals, absence of past and future, absence of God. For her human existence is a kind of "mutilated present," and the life of man a life of "exile from being and eternity."

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If the supernaturalist humanists differed among themselves so did the naturalist humanists. It was interesting to note how often the appeal was made at the Congress for a "Copernican" and "Galilean" conception of man which would take human existence and its improvement as the center of concern and which would accept the *unfinished* character of human life as a challenge to create a more desirable future. So long as the discussion kept on the level of abstractions there seemed to be unanimity among the naturalists. But as soon as methods and concrete proposals were discussed an abyss separated those whom we may call democratic humanists from the Soviet variety. Here the dividing line was the question whether the means used to achieve the abstractly desirable ends were to be continuous with those ends and whether the costs of progress were to be *voluntarily* assumed through democratic process by those involved in history, or were to be imposed upon them by those who "knew" what was best. When these matters arose in concrete form, the philosophers of all schools broke ranks and realigned themselves independently of their metaphysical differences. The "Communist humanists" found themselves isolated, charged with defending inhumanism in practice and nonsensical doctrines in science.

The same phenomenon was apparent in the discussions of value. Logical positivism was criticized, sometimes unfairly, for its belief that so-called judgments of value were neither true nor false, and therefore not cases of knowledge. Existentialism was criticized for making judgments of value arbitrary and subjective, for conceiving of value decisions as a romantic defiance in a necessarily hostile world. There seemed to be wide agreement that reasonable judgments of worth could be distinguished from unreasonable. But when it came to the conception of Reason—which all philosophers invoked in some form—the naturalists maintained that since human values acquire their quality of value by being related to human desire, only the use of scientific intelligence could help us discover the differences between reliable and unreliable values. The metaphysicians, both religious and non-religious, maintained that since values were eternal objects commanding absolute allegiance, scientific intelligence was not appropriate. Either a logic based on the coherent structure of the world or the intuitions of direct insight were the only reliable instruments. Professor A. C. Ewing, in a very able paper, defended the use of both

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approaches wherever differences in value-judgments were not resolvable by scientific inquiry into factual consequences.

Two things became clear in the discussion of the nature of reason. First, that reason was not merely the use of formal logic, for a person could still be logical in judging what follows from certain premises without being reasonable in his judgment of values or judgment of anything else. Second, it was just as clear that reason could not be identified with any special method employed in any special field, for one could be reasonable in his judgments about human behavior even though such behavior could not be placed in a mathematical scale or put in a test tube.

What, then, was reason? The nearest anyone came to giving a positive answer was Professor Bernays of Zurich, notable for his work in the philosophy of mathematics and logic. He warned that to insist on standards of evidence and rigor, exemplified in the exact sciences, as criteria for all other fields of knowledge was to play into the hands of the prophets of irrationalism and despair by restricting the possible domains of rational inquiry. Scientism could be just as much an obstacle to the advance of new knowledge as obscurantist metaphysics. Both positivism, which limited itself to what was observed by the senses, and apriorism, which laid down as forever binding certainties in advance of experience, must be rejected. Reason, for Professor Bernays, was the common or general procedure illustrated in the different sciences from the most exact to the most inexact. The common pattern of this generalized scientific method, according to Professor Bernays, did not shrink in horror from metaphysical problems or questions of *Lebensphilosophie*. Reason was truly sovereign in all domains. There was something tantalizingly similar between the standpoints of Professor Bernays and those of John Dewey, but when Professor Bernays was asked to develop his positive conception of reason in greater detail, he pleaded for more time and promised to work out the details on another occasion.

As if to drive home the realization how precarious the place of reason is, Bertrand Russell read a paper during the same session on "The Postulates of Scientific Method." In order to avoid the appearance of logical inconsistency, he argued, scientists must *assume* certain beliefs to be true about the nature of the world. These assumptions themselves cannot be proved scientifically without begging the ques-

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tion; why, then, make one set of assumptions rather than another? Russell's answer was not very clear. The possibility that "reasonableness" in making ultimate assumptions could be explained in terms of the exactions imposed by the world on any behavior seeking appropriate means to achieve ends was not fully explored in the discussion. Many of Russell's auditors got the impression, which he subsequently denied, that he was defending a wholesale skepticism, and that beneath his brilliant paradoxes he was really fortifying the view that all basic assumptions, not only about the structure of values but also about the structure of facts, were equally valid. If one were stubborn enough, one could believe anything. It was quite clear, however, that without subscribing to any other historically familiar philosophical position, Russell was indicating what he believed were the limits of empiricism. Science is developed in the course of experience, but in order to justify the inferences which science makes we are thrown back upon certain principles or postulates concerning the structure of the world that cannot be logically deduced from the facts of experience. Therefore, if science is a valid body of knowledge, we must know something independently of experience.

The most exciting of the plenary sessions was the one devoted to the nature of the good society. Professor Rieger of Charles University, Prague, presented a defense, in the guise of a philosophy of collective work, of the "new socialist humanism and democracy" in Eastern Europe. Professor Karl Popper of the University of London delivered a penetrating critique of the Communist version of Marxism. The battle was joined in a sharp discussion despite Professor Pos's efforts to blanket it. Professor Popper defined the task of social science as the prediction of the unintended consequences of our intended action. Denying the existence of historical laws, he claimed that Communist predictions were prophecies that had more in common with theology than science. "It is the task of public policy," he declared, "not to increase happiness but to fight against misery," on the interesting ground that it was easier to discover what made men unhappy than what made them happy. He argued that the desire to make people happy by decree could easily lead to dictatorship. This position received support from Professor Julius Ebbinghaus of Marburg, son of the famous German psychologist and one of the few carefully screened German philosophers who were invited. (Philosophers of

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Fascist or Nazi taint were barred.) Ebbinghaus wisely observed that "the common error of all despotisms is the right arrogated by the community or individuals to compel people to be happy." But he added that "the common error of democracies in which each one is permitted to pursue his own happiness at any cost is that it makes people turn to despotism."

Returning to the theme of Communist theory, Popper charged: "We face a Marxism that has come down to the level of Goebbels from the considerable heights of Marxist intellectualism." And referring to the kidnapping by the totalitarians of all words expressing the generous ideals of liberalism and democracy, he said: "I feel old-fashioned enough to call that type of society where one can get rid of the government without bloodshed a democracy, and the other kind a tyranny."

A fierce defense of the Communist philosophy was made by the leading Communist theoretician at the Congress, Arnost Kolman, in the discussion of Popper's paper, and in his own speech at another session. On both occasions the defense took the form of an impassioned attack on Western philosophy. The only genuine humanism, he shouted, could be found "in the Slavonic nations" headed by the Soviet Union. The only correct philosophical principles were to be found in the works of Marx, Lenin and Stalin. The only duty of contemporary philosophy was to fight for the higher values of the Soviet Union against the warmongering Western powers and their miserable philosophical apologists, preachers of defeatism, mysticism, irrationalism and inhumanity. All schools of Western philosophy were denounced, and some philosophers by name—Sartre, Russell and Dewey. And more in the same vein. Amsterdam was given a preview of the sessions that were held shortly after at Wroclaw-Breslau. Kolman struck only one conciliatory note. Despite the bankruptcy of all philosophies except that of Leninist-Stalinism, the errors of those philosophers who supported the foreign policy of the Soviet Union against Western imperialism would be overlooked.

For the last thirty years, before he was sent by Moscow to Prague, Kolman had been philosophical hatchet-man for the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. No one had praised Stalin more fulsomely for his philosophic and scientific genius. "It is our party and our leader, Stalin," Kolman once wrote, "who directs, from the

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position and in the spirit of Lenin, all our sciences, including the physical sciences." No one had ever dared reply to him without risking his neck. But there was no M.V.D. at Amsterdam to protect Kolman from the retorts of those whom he had abused.

Lord Samuel was the first to reply to Kolman, contrasting his tone and spirit with the conciliatory approach taken by other speakers on the program. Then Bertrand Russell arose. He began by asking Kolman to take home a message: "When you return to Prague, Mr. Kolman, tell your employers that the next time they see fit to send a representative to an International Congress of Philosophy, they would accomplish more if they sent someone not so crude. If we must listen to propaganda, we prefer to hear it on a little higher level."

Addressing himself to the audience, he continued: "Mr. Kolman has told us at great length that 'higher values' exist in the Soviet Union. He has not, unfortunately, told us in what these values consist and what makes them 'higher.' Consequently, I am thrown back on the principle of induction to get his meaning. I gather, then, he is saying that the complete absence of freedom of speech, press and assembly is a higher value than their presence. He must also mean that the creation of artificial famines in which millions of lives are lost is another value of a high order. And presumably he must hold that the existence of slave labor and concentration camps from the Arctic to the Caucasus is a third value of considerable magnitude. However, he has not offered a scintilla of evidence that these are genuine values and that they are higher in the human scale than the practices which prevail in the West. If he can prove that they are really high human values instead of what they appear to be—ruthless means of enforcing the most horrible regime of terror in human history—I shall be the first person to be convinced."

The third speaker to question Kolman made a few points in short order. He first asked how Kolman could assert there was any kind of democracy in the Soviet Union in the absence of political democracy, and charged him with confusing democracy with equality. "One can have an equality in bondage as in freedom." Second, he showed that Kolman's conception of a party philosophy and its privileged character provided the premises for a continuous purge in the arts and sciences. In this connection he cited the case of the

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Soviet astronomers and biologists. Third, he wondered how Kolman could justify his statement that the Soviet Union had been the only consistent anti-Fascist power in view of the Nazi-Soviet Pact and Molotov's declaration in 1940 that "Fascism is a matter of taste."

Although he had delivered his speech in English, Kolman replied in German. He was in a spluttering rage. The criticisms, he said, confirmed his charges against Western Philosophy. He asserted that complete freedom of press existed in the Soviet Union whereas in the West freedom of press existed only on paper. (This brought the retort from one of his critics: "That is where it belongs.") He denied that collectivization had been forcibly imposed on the Russian peasants and dismissed talk of famine as propaganda. He defended the Soviet penal system as a vast humanitarian project. He argued that since "in science there is only one truth" to compel others to accept this truth does not in the least deprive them of their freedom. Those whose errors are pointed out by the Central Committee of the Communist Party are grateful for the trouble the latter takes with them. There were no purges in science. To the pointed query: "What about Vavilov?" (the eminent Russian biologist who died in a concentration camp for espousing the biological theories of Mendel and T. H. Morgan) he declared with perfect *sang-froid,* "Why everybody knows he was an English spy: he confessed it himself before he died." He had not heard of the case of the counter-revolutionary Soviet astronomers but if they were punished they must have been guilty since—and no one could follow the leap here—it was clear that the Soviet Union had won the war against Hitler. He flatly denied that Molotov had ever said Fascism was a matter of taste. He had never seen a word about it in *Pravda.*

Kolman's remarks were received with chilled amusement by the Western philosophers and with some embarrassment by the philosophers of the satellite countries.

The presence and behavior of the Communist philosophers at the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy had one unintended consequence. It brought home to the philosophers of the Western world that despite all their differences they still constituted an intellectual community with a common tradition. It also revealed the character of the Soviet totalitarian threat to their philosophic vocation, and that under some circumstances Socrates would have to serve

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not only as a model of how a philosopher should live, but also of how a philosopher should die—free and unafraid.

The Congress illustrated two possible modes of meeting the Communist challenge to the West. The first was illustrated in the debate in executive session on the resolution for freedom of inquiry, and in the action taken. It is the method of silence, retreat from one's own conviction, and evasion. It is compounded of needless fear and futile hope—fear that recognition of differences will intensify the struggle between the Soviet and Western ways of life, and hope that if these differences are ignored, the Communists will call off their offensive. It is not only cowardly but, judging by its effects, unintelligent. For it emboldens the opponents of democracy, and infects its defenders with doubt and irresolution.

The second is the method followed in the public discussion. It does not pretend that the Communist and Western modes of life are two species of democracy. Honestly recognizing that the West still falls short of realizing its own ideals, it none the less carries the attack to the enemy. It unmasks by pitiless logic the propaganda of the calculated lie. It spreads on the record the facts of Communist cultural terror. It exposes the absurdity of "party-truth" and "party-science." It then presents in positive terms the enduring values of the democratic way of life and of free thought and free action. This method recommends itself not only by its intrinsic dignity but, as the open sessions of the Congress showed, by its effects.

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Thomas Merton

A RESPONSORY, 1948

Suppose the dead could crown their wit
With some intemperate exercise,
Spring wine from their ivory
Or roses from their eyes?

Or if the wise could understand
And the world without heart
That the dead are not yet dead
And that the living live apart

And the wounded are healing,
Though in a place of flame.
The sick in a great ship
Are riding. They are riding home.

Suppose the dead could crown their wit
With some intemperate exercise,
Spring wine from their ivory
Or roses from their eyes?

Two cities sailed together
For many thousand years.
And now they drift asunder.
The tides of new wars

Sweep the sad heavens,
Divide the massed stars,
The black and white universe
The booming spheres.

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Down, down, down
The white armies fall
Moving their ordered snows
Toward the jaws of hell.

Suppose the dead could crown their wit
With some intemperate exercise,
Spring wine from their ivory
Or roses from their eyes?

George Anthony

DECEMBER EVENING

A cold dusk. Evening closes in a crush
Of sadness threatening snow. The public park
Turns secret in slack wings among the dark
Witchcrafts of bare trees. Precocial gusts
Quicken the nerves, while in remembered rush
Of swans lovers lie still. One brittle spark
Of leaf afire like a summer heart
Dies on black water to a graveyard pulse.

Tonight a cold spade leans against the world
Waiting the service bell. The swarming sky
Will tread our sleep while the young dead unearth
Their careless hands like April ferns unfurled
Too soon. Tomorrow propitious snow will lie
A clean white straw for another manger birth.

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J. Laughlin

A BIT DIFFERENT

Things are a bit different in
some other countries
even in
some of the countries of poor
old brokendown Europe
last
year when I was in Italy wait-
ing for a train in the station
restaurant in Bologna
a young
Italian woman came in with a
baby and sat down at the best
table in the middle of the di-
ning room (first class)
from
the way she behaved with that
baby you could see that she
was proud of it all right
and
an elderly man at another ta-
ble came over and played with
the baby letting it pull his
nose and his ears
yes it was a
beautiful baby beautiful and
black as a negro baby can be.

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Ramón J. Sender

TALE OF THE HOT LAND

When the tree of fire began to bloom, the man took his horse and went off to the neighboring market place. He had often seen the tree bloom near the door of his house.

Each morning the tree of fire opened its blossoms, and precisely at that moment the man went out, mounted his horse, and said, "Giddap, old boy."

He pricked the horse's flank with his spur, and the horse went off at a lazy trot.

The man's complexion was sallow, his skin dry and parched like the tobacco leaves sold in the square of the near-by town. When he returned from the market place at sundown, he found himself hesitating. At that indecisive hour everything became blurred and he didn't know which road to take from among the seven which led by different ways to his house.

Six years ago he had had to give up one of these roads because when he drew near his house, the sun having set, he saw an animal, the color of the earth, which in the twilight seemed to be a coyote. But he could never tell whether it was a coyote or a dog. When the animal came up beside him and looked at him submissively, his horse whinnied, refusing to go any farther. Finally the horse veered off the road and galloped away. Then the man heard cries far away, like an injured child's, and among those cries a voice which said:

O, how the day falls,
O, how fast the night comes.

He didn't know whether it was a human being or a coyote, and even if it was a coyote, he couldn't tell whether it was the same animal he had just seen or some other one. At that hour everything was blurred.

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At home the man remembered the submissive, yellow glance of the animal, and asked himself, "Was it a dog, was it a coyote, was it a man?" He decided to give up that road and take the one near it, although that meant going roundabout a great way before reaching his house. To return by this road he had to begin his journey much sooner, and in this way he arrived home very late.

Five years ago he had also abandoned the second road because he had heard a noise which he couldn't make out or explain to himself. It was the sound of a cane striking against the road, as if a man were approaching and leaning on it. Neither the cane nor the man was visible, but the little sound persisted, and with the tapping of the wood against the ground came the sound of a little metal knob which seemed to be stuck in the handle, loose and insecure. The man stopped his horse and listened to the sound which went before him, always before him and always near. In order to see better, he rose in the stirrups and cried out, "Hey, you with the cane! Where are you?"

Both horse and rider waited uneasily. He had to give up that road too, and although the one near it, the third, was only a path and much longer, from that day he used it to go home.

One day at a bend in the road he found a white heron that spoke like a woman. On the first day the heron said:

The day will not come back,
Asleep or dead perhaps
On the distant glowing rocks.

Its mane bristling, the horse broke into a gallop. Thereafter always on returning by that road the man went along thinking of the white heron, and although expecting it at every turn, he was always astonished when it appeared.

Four years ago he had given up that way. To find another road he had to start half an hour earlier, going northward from the market place. One day at that confused hour when the air before becoming quite black takes on the gray body of mist or smoke, he saw a rabbit pass before him on the road. It was the same rabbit that appeared in the face of the moon during the time of Quetzalcoatl. The rabbit repeated the words of the moon's lullaby without singing it. He took this as a bad sign and decided to return and look for the

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fifth road. "Only three roads remain." And with growing anxiety he hurried to get home before night fell.

He found the fifth road, which was much longer, and he was obliged to leave the market place even earlier. He took this road several times without meeting a thing. But one day he saw an old man sitting at the roadside. The horse stopped and pricked up its ears. "Giddap, old boy," said the man, spurring it on.

But the horse stood stock still. The man on the roadside had two clear gray eyes; he had a nose, but no mouth. Nevertheless he spoke: "Your horse doesn't want to go," he said.

"How are you able to speak, man? How can you speak without a mouth?"

The man raised his hand in the air. It was a very white hand and in it was a mouth which spoke. The rider passed around him, but the next day when he saw the old man sitting in the bend of the road, he turned tail and went back to the market place. He looked for the other road, the sixth one. Only two remained. He was sure of finding something on the sixth road too, and he said to himself, "What awaits me on this road?" Now he found a tree which, instead of growing, diminished. First it was very large, but every day it seemed to shrink a little. After passing it for two weeks, he noticed that the tree had become a shrub, had taken human form, and was about to speak. He heard a whispering which could have been the sound of fallen leaves, and then part of a song's refrain:

Of my wood are gallows made,
Of my wood. . . .

The rider said, "I know now. On that tree a man was hanged two weeks ago."

Resigned and crestfallen, he looked for the seventh road. He knew that this was the last and that if he should have to give it up, there would be nothing to do but go by no road at all, since the white men had appropriated all the others.

Then he had an idea which seemed very appropriate. Perhaps all these mishaps, which always befell him at the same hour, would no longer occur by the light of day; and he decided to return early, so that when he got home the sun would not yet have set. "Hereafter, I shall always return by day," he said.

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On the seventh road, which was even longer, he returned an hour earlier than he had on the previous one. And so, on each of the following days, he got home before sundown and met nobody. He was happy and went home singing. His skin was losing its sallowness and was becoming fresh and rosy. He thought he might take the other roads too, as long as he traveled before sundown, but from his house he sometimes heard the white heron's laughter and the coyote's howl.

He kept returning by the seventh road. In the market place one day he heard a woman's laughter that seemed like the white heron's, and yet it was very sweet. He went with the woman to the hut where she lived and there he stayed an hour longer than the usual time for his departure, so that when he got home the sun had already set. The mist lay like a coiling turbid light stretched along the valley. The rider saw himself passing down the other roads, bent over his horse, and wrapped in his serape, with its black, gray, and white squares which the wind tightened about his chest. He saw himself disconcerted before the indefinite coyote, the white heron, the man whose mouth had passed down to his hand, and the tree that shrank. He saw himself on the other road listening to the tapping of the cane that walked by itself, and he saw himself falling back before the sinister rabbit of the moon. But now that he was on the seventh road he felt safer with the love of the woman. One day when he thought he was already quite near his house, his horse inexplicably halted.

"Let's go, old boy." But though feeling the spur in its flank, the horse backed up little by little. The rider rose in the stirrups and looked ahead of him. He saw nothing. The road was unobstructed. But the horse refused to go forward. He dismounted and took the reins. He pulled at them, but the horse drew back again. Then the man went ahead and saw lying on the earth beside a cactus, a newborn infant, its face full and pink. It was wrapped in a small, white blanket, and seeing the man it smiled. The man shook his head compassionately. "Who could have abandoned you here?"

He couldn't believe that the child was completely alone and going up to a little mound he gazed over the plain. Nobody was there. He cried out, making a trumpet of his hands, "Ehhhhhhh!"

He went back to the child. Not knowing what to do he finally resolved to take it up and return to his horse. The animal refused

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to be mounted. The rider managed to reach the saddlebow with one hand, and then to spring into the mount. He went on with the infant in his arms, but now he was happy and smiling.

The horse went along, rearing and bounding, refusing to go forward, or going forward by leaps only to back up and stall obstinately. The rider chastised it with his whip. Finally he succeeded in subduing the horse, and looking at the child who seemed to have fallen asleep, he thought, "This road withholds inexpressible surprise; this is undoubtedly the right one." But the twilight lengthened without falling into night. Although he should have reached home he saw nothing before him but the deserted road, and here and there in the slight breeze little whirlwinds of dust strewing the earth.

He spurred his horse, which hastened its pace, and looking at the child, he said, "Would you like to come home with me? Would you like to live with me?"

The child answered with the voice of a grown-up, the voice of a person prematurely old, "Yes, but look at my teeth."

Opening its mouth, it showed its teeth, yellow and fierce, like those of an old sheep dog. The rider threw the child from him, and the horse reared when it felt the bundle rolling down its haunches.

Rider and horse began to fly toward the west. Behind him the rider could hear the white heron's laughter, the tapping of the cane, and the pitiful howl of the coyote. The rising moon wore the blue rabbit in its face, and the bush behind him kept asking, "Where is your road?"

The rider thought of the infant's voice, which reminded him of the voice of the old man whose mouth had passed down to his hand. Having lost the last road, rider and horse wandered aimlessly thereafter. When the Indians listen attentively at sundown they hear the sound of the horse's hoofs, always near and always far away.

(*Translated from the Spanish by Edwin Honig*)

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Robert Morse

OUR MUTUAL FRIEND

"In these times of ours, though concerning the exact year there is no need to be precise, a boat of dirty and disreputable appearance, with two figures in it, floated on the Thames, between Southwark Bridge which is of iron, and London Bridge which is of stone, as an autumn evening was closing in." The sinister search on the water has begun, and the first chapter of Dickens' sinister masterpiece. We find ourselves on the water, and muddy water is to trickle and seep through all the following pages. The two figures in the boat are Gaffer Hexam and his daughter Lizzie. Lizzie shows a strong dislike for her father's occupation, which is that of robbing the pockets of drowned men. Gaffer remonstrates with her in such terms as these: "How can you be so thankless to your best friend [the river], Lizzie? The very fire that warmed you when you were a baby was picked out of the river alongside the coal barges. The very basket that you slept in, the tide washed ashore. The very rockers that I put it upon to make a cradle of it, I cut out of a piece of wood that drifted from some ship or another." Such rhetoric from the mouth of a man who is pictured as the roughest of waterside scavengers is likely to seem to us, in our day, as Dickens at his most improbable. And when his daughter answers in speech of even greater refinement and purity of grammar, the question arises: How realistic did the works of Dickens seem to his contemporary Londoners?

It is possible that the question of true-to-life did not arise, and that Dickens' contemporaries accepted his dark vision of England and London and London's creatures as readily as we today accept Raymond Chandler's California with its brutal and neurotic crew of killers and private-eyes—or even the sweet mirage of New York presented by our women's magazines. And yet we have been trained

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in the modern school of realism where naturalness of dialogue and "truth" of psychological reaction are the touchstone, and often the only merit.

With the authority of a teller of folk tales, for whom naturalness has no purpose, Dickens simply assures his readers: This is what happened. And for the most part we are pleased to believe him, no matter how arbitrary the sequence of events may seem. The disappointing moments in his novels are just those moments when his persuasive genius fails, and disbelief returns us, in spite of ourselves, to the outer world. Such lapses are often quite grave, at least at first view. It is not easy, for example, to believe that the noble old Jew, Riah, could accept his long bondage to an ugly master and an ugly occupation because of gratitude. Nor is it easy to believe that Florence Dombey, in *Dombey and Son,* could have gone on loving her father so faithfully in the face of his harsh treatment. And yet these feeble motivations are essential to much of the action in these novels. Why did Dickens risk weakening his project? On reflection, it will appear that in both cases he has permitted a conception of moral goodness, of moral right, to prevail over human probability.

Riah's gratitude to the monstrous Fascination Fledgeby is seen as a sacred and unalterable obligation, a noble trait in a noble (if far-fetched) character. It is Gratitude itself. Again, in the case of poor Florence Dombey, a good child *ought* to love her parent, and love him she does in spite of all opposition.

But these rare lapses into disbelief, easy as they are to explain away on various grounds, do little damage to our acceptance of Dickens' world. The writer's art confers on his creations an intensity of existence that makes their fantastic proportions seem the true proportions, and, as we read, we believe—just as we do not doubt the distorted forms of Greek sculpture or of Picasso's *baigneuses,* which if translated into flesh would send us screaming in flight.

Why do these monsters of purity and evil, these ridiculous eccentrics and grotesques, hold our attention? What field of experience does Dickens draw on to make us feel their truth? Do they not live under our own skins, waiting to be given the externalized form of myth and art? Dickens has gone underground to that region where the mists of unnameable anxieties and the smoke of infantile terrors prevail. There, at the edge of the sea of sleep, he has built his Lon-

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don. On the opposite shore dwell the Gorgons, Andromeda and Perseus, the Minotaur in the Cretan maze. The Harpies call across the separating waters to Miss Flite's birds—Hope, Joy, Youth, Peace, Rest, Life, Dust, Ashes, Waste, Want, Ruin, Despair, Madness, Death, Cunning, Folly, Words, Wigs, Rags, Sheepskin, Plunder, Precedent, Jargon, Gammon, and Spinach. In this underground metropolis (whose visual aspects have been so wonderfully reported by Phiz) no one need be surprised to see Lady Dedlock emerging from Tom-all-alone's, and Quilp creeping into Little Nell's bed, or eating eggs, shell and all, to terrify his wife.

How does Dickens keep the vaulting of his cave-world secure, and stop each chink against skepticism and outer day, of which the least beam would disintegrate Miss Havisham's wedding cake where generations of rats had failed?

Consider first the variety and energy of invention Dickens infuses into every part of his books, an inventiveness which, like the music of Beethoven, sweeps away any apprehension of fatigue with its great mood of boundless improvisation. Each object, each creature, animal or human, must be given personality and a unique vitality. He will play with the description of a tavern sign with such brilliant fancy, so many allusions to unexpected domains, that one scarcely notices that this painted board occupies two pages of the text. The horse, as in *The Old Curiosity Shop,* is characterized as thoroughly as his drivers. Each waiter, coachman, clerk, although perhaps never to be seen again, during his brief appearance is impaled in the bright center of our attention, and we are obliged to see his qualities and failings ludicrous or sad, before he is released to his invisible life. Dickens is like a medium who bids us look into his crystal ball, and as we see the images form, he keeps a sharp eye on us to see that the spell does not falter, and at the same time urges: Look! Look more closely! Are you sure that you see it *all*?

In short he can find interest, and the material of art, in almost anything. Often this liveliness is effected by simple but surprising juxtapositions, by odd angles of vision, by ironic reversals of his meaning (as "the *divine* Tippins"), by sheer verbal vivacity, by sonorous rhetorical devices of alliteration and repetition—which sometimes indeed embarrass by their excessiveness. But take this: Mr. Pecksniff is merely warming his hands at the fire, but he warms

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them "as benevolently as though they were somebody else's, not his." A simple action is made into pure fun, and at the same time the false goodness of Pecksniff is revealed.

The roof of Dickens' cave hangs on a strong ribbing of plot, and here again he shows his invention in a gothic ingenuity. It might be argued that all novels have a plot, but surely *Anna Karenina, For Whom the Bell Tolls, Madame Bovary,* have a kind of narrative structure that differentiates them from *Bleak House, Our Mutual Friend,* or *Great Expectations.* The authors of the first group apply their art to producing an air of naturalness, almost of biography. The "story" of their books given an over-all social and geographical environment, grows out of the nature of their characters. The complexities are those of psychological interrelations; and although there may be a wealth of naturalistic incident, there is a minimum of the old wills, concealed identities, and dramatic coincidence dear to Dickens. Such novels have the cadence of veracity. At their best, they have no more plot than a true account of human lives—which is no plot at all, compared to the abstract pattern of Cinderella, the Oedipus myth, *Bleak House.*

Except for its survival in certain detective novels, the large interwoven design (manipulated, artificial, if you like) has gone out of fashion with its calculated tangles and calculated unravelings. Perhaps, leaving aside the out-and-out folk tale, its inherent drawbacks can be overcome only by such master novelists as Dumas, Balzac, Dickens. But it is comfortable to begin a "plot novel," to feel its bulk in the hand, and to know that all those pages to come will be ordered with a felicity and ingenuity beyond the accidents of actual life, just as it is a satisfaction to hear the opening themes of a Haydn sonata and know in advance that they are going to be worked out according to a beautiful law and will come to an end at the precise moment when the sonata form is satisfied. For a plot does not depend primarily on surprise and suspense; it depends on completeness of resolution. The successful plot novel, like an ingenious fairy tale, can be re-read without loss of interest, and we come again to the ritual triumph of hero and heroine over the opposing (or evil) forces with the same sense of moral order. Indeed we often may guess, before we are halfway through our first reading, the main resolution of the plot, because such and such a denouement is pre-

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cisely what would please us most. Whereas when we begin a novel by Colette or Dorothy Richardson we have no idea what end we shall arrive at—just as the shape of a Strauss tone poem cannot be guessed from its opening measures.

But whoever has read one Dickens novel takes up a second with the happy confidence that the persons he meets there, however remote from each other they may at first appear, will all interlock in a tightening pattern and each make his influence felt by the others, as in a folk tale the ragged old woman casually befriended by the third son is sure to reappear in his hour of need. And it is not surprising in this mythic England that its inhabitants should be related to each other with a folk-tale coherence.

The major writers of today have been curiously willing to dispense with the advantages of the well-meshed plot. For however mechanical plot may seem, however prefabricated its dovetailing and niceties and knot-tying, it still gives a novelist one of the most obvious means of securing *unity*. Our novelists, like our free-verse poets, have set themselves the appalling task of reaching form by pure intuition—a chancy appeal, at best, to the shifting and unguessable sympathies of their readers.

The author of *Great Expectations* took no such risk. With so much of the eccentric, effervescent, and improbable to impart he could not readily overlook the gross advantages of a unifying plot. But he also used other, more subtle devices to give unity to each novel.

The word "caricature" is often associated with Dickens, perhaps to some extent because of the brilliant Grand Guignol drawings of Cruikshank and Phiz. The term loses much of its force if we view Dickens' world as the imaginative projection of an inner world underlying actuality. A caricaturist and satirist (unless his motives are those of interested propaganda, political or otherwise) stands in a mundane and moral daylight with Voltaire and Aristophanes, directing his missiles cruel or gay at the stupidities, the pretensions, the evil practices of his less enlightened fellows, and thereby wins them to greater sanity. But what are we to think of a writer who pictures virtue as extravagantly as vice? For are not Little Nell and Tom Pinch and Florence Dombey as monstrously overdrawn as Pecksniff and Mrs. Jellaby? Are these caricatures intended as sign-

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posts to guide us to more rational and moral behavior, or are they the creations of a sensibility that reveled in the haunts of Dr. Groddeck's "it"? The "caricature" may be simply the intensification or distortion of dream, but from the point of view of *unity,* if Dickens' people are caricatures they are invoked at an almost identical level of caricature, and once slapped on the back by his masterly hand they rise and breathe the same vigorous air.

Although these characters seem so often to emerge from folk tale and dream, they are not all nightmarish. Sleep has its pleasant apparitions. And among the legendary types we fleetingly detect underlying the personages of Dickens there are many Cinderellas, Jack the Giant Killers, Dick Whittingtons, Fairy Godmothers, and Pucks, as well as the Ogres and Robber Bridegrooms. (Who could Mr. and Mrs. Smallweed be, by the way, other than Punch and Judy?) But these lay or archetypal figures do not often oppress us with familiarity; they are so richly clothed in borrowed garments of actuality that the smooth, ancient timbers of their limbs rarely peep through. No, it must not be supposed that Dickens' underground London is cut off entirely from its counterpart. The million sights and sounds of outer life drift downward in a kind of sediment, and, as certain jelly-like organisms gather the debris of the sea bottom about them to form a shell, so Dickens' characters crust themselves in these fragments of actuality.

Dickens notoriously used the names and peculiarities of many persons encountered in his own life, as well as the names and features of buildings and places. He kept the sharpest lookout for traits and manners, for little absurd, grotesque, or pathetic ways. Daily he crammed his memory with this loot, and when the time came for the creation of a new tavern, character, or street, he had only to agitate these thousand bits of observation, and administer, as from a salt shaker, the proper seasoning for person or place. In similar fashion he distributes the deeper traits of pride, hypocrisy, cheerfulness, fidelity, greed, and the like—as well as the general attributes of youth, beauty, intelligence, etc., together with hundreds of occupations such as fishing, body snatching, the law. His salt shaker holds them all. How else, beyond plot and uniformity of caricature, does Dickens integrate his novels?

One soon becomes aware that each book arises from a single

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theme, although the variations are so brilliant and ingenious it is not always easy to arrive at the most basic statement. However, once the most inclusive statement has been found it will be seen that this main theme is the raison d'être and the explanation of all parts of the book, and the reader may take a special pleasure in tracing much seemingly incongruous material back to this central source. Each novel, then, is *about* something, and furthermore about something serious. *A Tale of Two Cities,* for example, is built on the solemn theme of resurrection.

Usually, to point and illustrate his main theme, Dickens selects some social or moral situation in need of reform, and attacks it with hot indignation. So, in *Bleak House* which has for its theme the dead hand of the past, he attacks the Court of Chancery. In *Nicholas Nickleby,* which is about innocent and generous youth's first acquaintance with "what is called the world—a conventional phrase which, being interpreted, often signifieth all the rascals in it," Dickens attacks the atrocious schools of his day, giving us Dotheboys Hall, a name that even now raises specters of hunger, cold, and injustice. Hypocrisy is the theme of *Martin Chuzzlewit,* and, regrettably, the institution chosen for illustration is the young Republic of the United States. *Our Mutual Friend* deals with Money, and here the Poor Laws are singled out for bitter rhetoric: "It is a remarkable Christian improvement, to have made a pursuing Fury of the Good Samaritan."

Thus it will be seen that these examples of Dickens' zeal for reform arise from the fundamental theme of each novel, and must not be mistaken for the main purpose of his books. They serve merely as illustrations, much as the bas-reliefs Dante introduces in the *Purgatorio* typify the faults to be purged at various levels of the Mount.

But beyond the basic theme, certain unifying sub-themes of another, perhaps more abstract, order can be discovered in these remarkably constructed books. These sub-themes, moving at right angles to the major premise, serve to secure the package already firmly corded lengthwise. Take *Our Mutual Friend* as an example.

Money, to repeat, is the main theme—from the Harmon will, to the ostentation of the Veneerings, the Lammles' cynical marriage, Mr. Boffin's feigned miserliness, the looting of drowned bodies, and so on. It is in these drowned bodies that a counter-theme reveals itself. There are four actual drownings, and three near-drownings,

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all of them involving important characters. As an embellishment to this subject, Dickens adds an almost gloating description of Gaffer's gruesome wallpaper of police handbills advertising corpses found in the river. ("This is them two young sisters what tied themselves together with a handkecher.")

Muddy Water might be called a variant of the drowning theme. We are never far from the Thames and its shipping and its dank mysteries—and here again we meet the river as a symbol of Life flowing toward the sea of Death, a symbol constantly recurring in the writings of Dickens. And, as it has been said of Shakespeare that each play follows a consistent imagery, it is easy to point out in *Our Mutual Friend* a poetic revelry in water associations. Here is a description of Riderhood's headgear: "an old sodden fur cap, formless and mangy, that looked like a furry animal, dog or cat, puppy or kitten, drowned and decaying." (This example is also an instance of Dickens' skill in coloring a character by oblique metaphorical methods. Everything about his personages must reveal and partake of their nature.)

Opposed to Muddy Water is the theme of Dust, with the Harmon dust heaps for starting point: "he grew rich as a Dust Contractor, and lived in a hollow in a hilly country composed of Dust. On his own small estate the growling old vagabond threw up his own mountain range, like an old volcano, and its geological formation was Dust. Coal-dust, vegetable-dust, bone-dust, crockery-dust, rough dust and sifted dust—all manner of dust." Scattered through the other novels there are many references to dust as the end of all living things, but here it seems more likely that the dust heaps represent the vanity of amassing wealth, or gold-dust—although our author takes care to leave his "good" characters well provided for in the end. (Of course with the felt proviso that these "good" people will use their means nobly toward furthering the great vague cause of Happiness.)

In *Our Mutual Friend* the use of another theme or principle may be observed, a principle which shapes, colors, and binds this novel together no less radically than the theme of money. This may be identified as the principle of *doubleness*. Dickens employs it in much the same way that a composer will unify all the movements of a symphony by repeating the same tone relation, interval, harmonic

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progression, or family of notes throughout the work. He uses doubleness, although far less simply, as Chopin uses thirds in an étude for thirds, in which the thirds are neither the melody or the musical significance of the piece, but the necessary medium of both.

To begin with, the characters group naturally into pairs—which is, of course, true of many novels. But where were there ever so many pairs, and pairs of pairs, and new pairs formed after a reshuffling of old pairs?

But this is only one aspect of doubleness. Let us consider the many examples of duplicity, disguise, false claims, hourglass reversals, and dual natures. John Harmon appears under two assumed names. We do not even know who he really is for a great part of the book. He exchanges clothes with a physical, double, or *Doppelgänger* whose corpse is wrongly identified as Harmon. Harmon also puts on false whiskers and a wig in another disguise. Headstone duplicates Riderhood's clothes in order to make him appear Eugene's murderer. Even Sloppy has *his* disguise.

We find further examples of duplicity in Mr. Boffin's pretense of turning miser; in the Lammles' deception of each other into marriage on the grounds of imaginary wealth; in Fledgeby's concealed traffic in "queer bills"; in Riah's enforced false front, etc.

Doubleness appears again as character duality. Charlie, with his mixture of "uncompleted savagery and uncompleted civilization," provides a good specimen of a divided nature—also Eugene, also Mortimer, among others. Then there is Twemlow who is meek, downtrodden, and vague until at the end he takes his tremendous stand in defense of the principles that make a gentleman.

The most grotesque use of doubleness is found in reversals of the natural role: Bella calls her Pa her younger brother, "with a dear venerable chubbiness on him"—although much of the time she patronizes him in an unpleasantly arch and incestuous way as if he were a faithful but unimportant lover; Lizzie loves her brother as a son; Jenny Wren, the Doll's Dressmaker, treats *her* alcoholic father as if he were a bad little boy—but Jenny is all doubleness, with her double life of visions, her crippled legs and vigorous hair, her precocious insight.

It is easy to cite many simpler instances of two-ness, such as the two wills, the two John Harmons, the Boffins' parlor—half of which,

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to suit Mrs. Boffin, is carpeted and fashionably furnished, while the other half reflects Mr. Boffin's taste in its resemblance to a taproom, even to sand and sawdust on the floor.

This unifying sub-theme has been considered in disproportionate detail partly because it is such a curious device in itself, partly because it illumines a little-known aspect of creative writing, and partly because it is the kind of thing that generally goes unnoticed in Dickens' highly artful art.

These then, to summarize, are some of the ways by which Dickens persuades readers to stay in his underground world and to believe, as long as they remain there, that this world is all-inclusive and subject to its own unique law: for the source of emotional vitality he draws on the deepest mythology of mankind, the personages of the myth being presented with a lavishness of minute and general characteristics that rivals the invention of life itself and prevents them from becoming the hollow shapes of folklore, although they embody or demonstrate through their actions the capital letter categories of sin and virtue or the lesser list of foibles and merits; these personages, since they are all lighted by the same searching but subterranean sun, are all evoked on the same level of "caricature" (to borrow a word from the upper world) and thus obey the prime law of their creator's art, which is unity; they obey this law still further in their interrelations, which are as imposed and ordered in pattern as the musical forms of the late eighteenth century—or as the arbitrary sequence of folk tale; unity is again established by the author's choice of a single animating theme for each novel, a theme gravely applicable to the common experience of Western man, and wonderfully reflected and varied in the people and events of the book; the basic theme is usually illustrated by some form of abuse, which Dickens attacks fiercely; lesser themes, more abstract, more "artful," almost *textural,* further the integration of each novel—as the themes of drowning, water-and-dust, and doubleness give coherence to *Our Mutual Friend,* so that wherever the loaf is sliced the same pattern of ingredients is revealed.

If Dickens could read these foregoing sentences, would he be amazed that so much is ascribed to him that he had never intended, and so much that he *had* intended is ignored? An idle question per-

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haps, but valid enough in an anemic age that squeaks and sips the strong blood of the dead artist. Perhaps our safest answer must be that whoever has made a masterpiece must have known what he was doing, fully as well as his critics. What knowledge we gain of Dickens through his novels reveals a complicated soul, bitterly aware of the causes for despairing, obsessed with death and decay, fascinated by the sordid, the evil, and the grotesque to such an extent that he brings his greatest gusto as a writer to their description. But even to the blackest of these descriptions he gives a tone of wry surface levity, a playfulness of language, that makes the horror of his subject both more ghastly and more supportable. He stands smiling at our elbow and points to the savagery and injustice. Indeed he is almost too *much* at our elbow, warning us what to feel, addressing us in lachrymose or heated perorations, clucking ruefully over his pathetic contrivances. Often he comes very close to spoiling his effects by this intrusion, but the thing to be felt is there, and even he (unlike Thackeray with his thumb in our buttonhole) cannot take it from us.

But in opposition to the pessimistic darkness, Dickens also exposes an almost childlike faith in Low Church goodness. He sets high value on kindness, patience, the innocence and elation of youth, the power of love to move aside dead mountains, or at least to make their weight bearable. And besides, he is the funniest writer in the world, with more *kinds* of fun than any other, from the broadest burlesque, through all gradations of the comedy of character, situation, manners, speech, parody, cruel and gentle wit, to the final subtlety of the tear-stained smile.

He has many ways of being serious as well, although he never produces in us the exaltation of high tragedy—partly because in these vast, many-peopled entertainments no single character is allowed to reach heroic proportions. The tears are the tears of pathos, and fall for a dying child, for shabby courage and humble fidelity. The tragic issue is simply the general contest of man with his own nature and the nature of things, for Dickens' belief in positive evil is implicit, and all of his characters either struggle against evil, or founder in it, or were born its creatures. But Dickens raises no protagonist of great intellectual, moral, or emotional stature to do battle. Is it because of this that he is usually esteemed in our time as a lesser figure than certain other nineteenth-century novelists? And yet, in its great

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variety, his work unites almost all of the ingredients to be found in each of these men, so that it is harder to sum up Dickens in a phrase or two than almost any other writer except Shakespeare or Dante. His quality is easily felt, but eludes statement, so that it seems comparatively simple to make some true and basic announcement about Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, or Proust. These three are generally considered "greater writers," but are they better novelists? Do they fuse their meanings, their intentions, their "axe to grind" into a single art form —or do they find the confines of the novel too cramping for the largeness of the thing they have to say, and impatiently brush aside the pretext of fiction in order to communicate directly?

Tolstoy shares Dickens' moral fervor, and his underlying themes are perhaps as serious, but even his supreme *War and Peace* is wanting in a kind of weight because of his optimistic ignorance of evil, and his refusal to use material that might sound "invented." Dostoevsky, of course, knew as much about sin and the irrational and every conceivable blackness as Dickens, and was often the wildest of comedians, but his immense and stormy vision seems to break out of control, and a Western reader, finding himself swept away on the back of the apocalyptic beast into the night, is likely to wish he might be set down on his own feet again, and find his bearings with the help of his own horn-rimmed spectacles. Yet Dickens has far more in common with Dostoevsky than with Proust, who, for all the sharpness of his scalpels, anatomizes a comparatively narrow segment of experience.

And yet Dickens, although he shares the quality of *excessiveness* which marks the Russians and the Frenchman as great artists, does not produce in the modern mind the same impression of a great immediate experience. Perhaps the secret lies in the word "immediate." We rarely put ourselves in the place of Dickens' characters and feel directly with them. We see them from without, and the romance of Florence Dombey touches us *personally* no more than the lovers in "The Eve of St. Agnes." We become Little Nell, in our own visceral being, no more than we become Rapunzel; and we suffer the pangs of Lady Dedlock with the same remote pain that the torments of Brunetto Latini communicate from the page of Dante. Who weeps for Peggotty's niece as they weep for Anna Karenina? In short, we are not forced into direct emotional participation,

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which is the goal of most contemporary writing since Tolstoy and Maupassant. The interest, the meaning, of Dickens' novels lies elsewhere, and if we are moved, we are moved in the serener regions of the spirit where poetry and folk tale make their appeal to understanding. No other major novelist builds his books so frankly by the poet's method.

As a poet he warns of Paul Dombey's death in symbolic terms of the sea's murmurings, for as a poet he deals everywhere in symbols and suggestive images and chanted repetitions and protracted fancies with an abandon denied to the prosier scribes of daily life—and therein lie both the freedom and the *order* of his writing. But as a poet he is far from the sad lyricism of Virginia Woolf or the melomania of D. H. Lawrence, although he touches them both at points; he more nearly resembles Chaucer and the robust poet-dramatists of the Elizabethan age. Yet (since it is hard to say anything "true" of Dickens) this too is a false picture—for whom does he *not* resemble one way or another?

Perhaps it is because of the detachment of the poetic method that Dickens' novels can be read again without loss of pleasure, for, as in a well-loved poem, the sequence is largely independent of the kind of time in which suspense draws us on. Since we have never been invited to identify ourselves passionately with the fate of the characters, and have not lived through their story as if it were our own, we do not return to Dickens as we are likely to return even to Tolstoy, with a sense of chill, of lost magic and shrunken dimension. For there are certain books as difficult to recapture in their essence as an old love, as difficult to relive as a passage in our past, simply because they *were* our love and our past, and their truth for us has been assimilated and has actually modified our present. Dickens' books are not of this kind; like a sonnet, or Jack and the Beanstalk, their rewards belong to a perpetual present.

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William Burford

NOT ONE BOWL OF TALLOW

As long as I knew her, she kept a white taper burning, in the center of a small crystal bowl. Even during daylight the tallow fed a flame, as if she wished to show the sun something more constant than itself. When she no longer maintained her ritual, we ceased to know each other. I would pass her on the street and look at her, but my eyes could not go deep. She wore an armor against wounds.

Her name was Margaret. She was a very brilliant girl. I met her at a lecture entitled, What Can Be Learned From Imaginative Literature. I was hungry for culture at that time of my life, trying to turn myself into an intellectual.

I saw her when I first entered the lecture room. There were not many people present, but she would have stood out from a larger audience. The faces were those of a northern land in the midst of winter. Their human pallor was deeper than the snow on the ground outside. They had not had a tanning sun for many months. But her face was of a whiteness that seemed to come not from the circumstance of latitude. I felt her skin would have the same whiteness in the midst of summer. It was not pallor; it was whiteness. And her black hair, eyebrows, and eyes, were as decisive as those of a charcoal portrait. But this is more the way I remember her than the way I saw her.

She caught my eye and held it until I became conscious of staring and turned away quickly. It was the quick turn, she told me later, that caused her to notice me, to become aware of my neck, to begin, when she would see me coming, to cross the street on some imaginary shopping errand that would bring her close to me. But all this came later.

That night, the lecturer concluded that nothing of a way to live

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could be learned from a novel. After he stopped speaking, he asked for questions from the audience. No one raised a hand. Margaret, to start discussion, not to show off her mind, said that the novelist himself could not live by the wisdom he showed in his work. "The artist," she said, "falls prey to the very passion that has pulled his characters to tragedy." Though I did not know, at the time, that she had written a novel, I felt that she was talking about herself, that she was falling in love with me. Such was my ego.

Her remarks did not stir up much controversy, and soon the audience rose and walked out, as a body. It seemed to be in fear of talking about life. It did not break up into little groups of argument, and I had no excuse to get near Margaret, to meet her by way of entering a circle that would, I felt, have formed around her as a center and listened to her talk. But I would have found myself doing most of the talking, little of the listening. I knew I would not have listened to her. I was not really interested in what she would have to say but rather in what she would lead me to say about myself. This is the kind of attitude, I know now, that wrecks love.

Margaret and I met, finally, in the bookshop where she was buying a one volume abridgment of Parkman's *The Battle For North America* and I was buying *Freudianism and the Literary Mind*. We arrived, at the same time, at the desk to pay. She looked at my title and asked, "What do you expect to find in that?"

She asked it not sarcastically, but in a voice genuinely concerned. She took me more seriously than I took myself, and the great quantity of that taking had to be love, I knew.

"Don't you think the future of the novel is in psychology?" I replied to her question.

"I don't know. But then I don't know much about psychology."

"Don't you want to know?" I said, not asked, with a sharp edge to my tongue.

"I don't think so," she said, and then after a short silence, "No. I don't want to know the least bit of psychology. I want to do things, not think about doing them. I like Italian opera. Do you?"

"No." I said, angry at her because I had never heard an Italian opera.

"I know you will," she said.

After a few days with her, I suddenly, one afternoon as I passed

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a hurdy-gurdy man, understood how much of my lie she had seen in her assertion, "I know you will."

But strangely, and it is one of those incredible perversities of which only the human animal is capable, I became less honest with her than more honest. She became to me like a person from whom one borrows money. You come to blame that person, to hate that person, to hold him guilty of your debt, accuse him in your mind of having hatched the loan as a conspiracy to humiliate you. And it was worse with Margaret. She had given, not loaned, me her honesty. I felt I must repay her with my dishonesty.

I plotted to pump a bellows against the coals of her attraction to me. I was mildly attracted to that striking white and black appearance of hers, and could carry out my plot because the smallest gesture of feeling would make her believe I loved her. She had said to me, "When you are in love, you swell the accidental brush of the little finger of the person you love into his hand upon your heart."

Thus, on a very clear, cold morning when we were out walking, the air like crystal the voice crashes with each word, I called her "Margie." Her breath gathered the crash of the name and breathed its fragments back into her lungs that worked to preserve it, as one might glue together the fragments of an heirloom, a broken bowl. The name was a caress of my tongue, a kiss, that she would come to feel as bits of glass slicing the interior of her breast, leaving scars that reopened to wounds.

And now, remembering the moment, I understand why someone like Margaret falls in love with someone like myself, as I was then. It is the love of the complicated for the ingenuous, of the master for the pupil, of the tragic for the comic, the tragic seeing too late that the comedy has turned grotesque.

In reality, Margaret was much more of a psychologist than I was. She was making a fight against complication, and I was, in a sense, her weapon. "Margie" put a sword in her hand, and she went about all the clear cold day laughing and crashing the air. She was on the level of gaiety where love must most often live.

One night when I was at her apartment listening to her records of *La Traviata,* after she had stopped the music and begun talking to me, I said to her, "I like your voice more than the singer's. Don't play any more records. Just talk to me." What I thought was, "At

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least your voice is a change from that prima donna squealing. Not much of a change, but a change nevertheless." I was thinking this while I told her I liked her voice.

It was then that she, not speaking, raised herself from the deep chair into which she had sunk, crossed the room to a low, filigreed, black-lacquered opium table, and took from one of the table's thin drawers a fresh white taper, and from the glimmering table top a small crystal bowl. She walked to the window which overlooked the walk I had to take to reach the house in which she lived. To free one of her hands to draw the curtains from the window glass, she transferred the taper to the hand in which she held the bowl, no larger than the cup that her palm made. She drew the curtains, flicked off the light switch, and there, through the window glass, was the moon in the vise of two black tree branches. She set the small crystal bowl on the window sill, struck a match, lit the taper wick, and held the long white taper so that the melting tallow dripped into the bottom of the bowl where it formed a miniature pond, magnified through the crystal to a lake that I saw from where I sat and thought her mad, in an opium trance, the whiteness of her face the white liquid make-up hardened to a shell on the faces of Japanese actresses who perform in the frozen-faced No plays, her eyebrows the painted ones of those professional women. She fixed the taper upright from the hardening tallow and braced it between her thumb and index finger until she felt that it would stand without leaning. Then she returned to her deep chair and whispered to me, "Be silent, listen, and the flame will speak to you."

I was silent for an uncomfortable five minutes. The flame, of a tininess and an immensity such as a star has, spoke such things as, "I am the flame of the taper in the hand of the man in the moon. I am the flame that is burning the table top, and the branches of the tree. And when the branches are burned through, the moon that they hold will fall and collide with the earth at the exact spot where you are." Then I left Margaret on the pretext of having to get some sleep.

As I walked away from her, on the walks the taper flame watched until I turned a corner, I became very rational and said to myself, "It was not an actual flame that was burning the table and the tree branches, only the reflection of the flame by the lacquer, and the

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window glass through which I saw the tree and the moon. The table and the branches were not really burning. It was the moonlight that painted her face to a mask." But the moon was heavy on my shoulders, and I wanted never to visit Margaret again.

The morning after that night, she came to me. She said that a fine taper, such as the one she had lit in the middle of the night, burned very slowly, and that the small bowl was not yet quite full of tallow. I could not bear her. My plot had succeeded, and I had no further use for her. Her suffering only made her more intolerable to me. I told her what I had done and how I felt.

Something cracked in her face, as if her face were a small crystal bowl that I had smashed. At the time, I saw the crack as that of the moonlight make-up. The crack made her more horrible.

Something like a brand took shape in her face, as if the crystal bowl were cut of her flesh and I had ground out a cigarette in it. I had been reading *The Scarlet Letter,* and I saw an S form in her face.

All she said was, "You wreck things not of the same quality as yourself."

Then it was that she put on an armor when she had to walk where I might pass her. And soon afterwards, without taking her books and records, she went away.

Why do I tell this painful story? I tell it because I must spin some of the anguish out of my system, the same anguish that Margaret suffered for me. I know the reasonless Italian-opera love, the desire to have a thousand bowls of tallow, each motion that begins the first bowl, and I know that the table and the branches are consumed by flame. It is my face whose crack is a horror that causes laughter. I am now what Margaret was, and another woman, whom I love, is what I was. I have had a white taper snuffed, a small crystal bowl smashed, and I have had to fashion an armor in which to walk the street.

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ART CHRONICLE

JEAN DUBUFFET AND "ART BRUT"

Jean Dubuffet is perhaps the one new painter of real importance to have appeared on the scene in Paris in the last decade. Though himself an erudite and sophiticated artist, he professes to despise cultivation, tradition, professional skill—all that which makes art "fine"—and to see genuine value only in the rawest forms of pictorial representation: graffiti, scrawlings on walls and sidewalks by untrained or impatient hands, the drawings of very young or untalented children, mudpies: *"art brut,"* "raw" art, art in its first and most rudimentary and least conscious stages. This is not at all the same thing as what is called "primitive" or naive art (Rousseau *le Douanier,* Alfred Wallis, Bombois, Vivin, Kane, Pickett, Bauchant, *et al.*), which is a relatively recent phenomenon and is in almost every case the result more or less of an untutored or visually innocent or only half-talented person's attempt to approximate traditional easel painting. The "primitives" do not appear in force until the popular diffusion of museum art is made possible by reproductions and journeyman copies. *Art brut,* however, does not depend on history or culture as much as that. It is found essentially the same in all times and places, wherever any one without training, interest, or artistic aspirations tries to communicate something graphically.

Dubuffet discovered *art brut* at a time when many advanced writers in France were beginning to question the premises of literature itself as a cultivated discipline and some among them were attempting—as they still are—to bring the novel and short story closer to actual contemporary experience by stripping the narrative of its acquired conventions and modelling their prose on colloquial, popular usage, as Hemingway has done. Like these writers, Dubuffet is reacting against a tradition so rich, mature, and recent that it still dominates the scene of its triumphs. Even though it is no longer adequately relevant to contemporary experience, the splendor and abundance of its achievements seem to threaten the originality of those who wish to make a fresh response to a fresh reality. In the face of such a situation, one is apt to decide that nothing less in principle than a radical rejection of the past will be enough to

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win the artist or writer his freedom. But a rejection of this sort is impossible in practice, however much it may be proclaimed in theory. It is not only that one cannot deliberately discard habits of culture instilled since childhood. Even if one could, the supposedly greater immediacy of the work of art or literature would be bought at the price of an even greater aesthetic impoverishment. New experience demands increased, not lessened, consciousness, and the anti-artistic artist or anti-literary writer can succeed only by transcending or suppressing the past, never by rejecting it. If he does so, he does so falsely, and the result is false. What, after all, is more false than the deliberately primitive?

Despite the appearance of his pictures, Dubuffet has not thrown off the past as he seems to think; he has, on the contrary, extended it by treating it selectively. To be sure, he has saved himself from the oppressive influence of Picasso and Matisse, which in its direct form paralyzes so many of the painters of his own generation in Paris. But he has not passed beyond culture and discipline and his art is not the raw, immediate expression that he himself advertises it as. What Dubuffet has actually done is to exchange one part of the modern tradition for another. Instead of Picasso and Matisse, he has chosen Klee. But Klee is not altogether the spontaneous, "state-of-nature" artist he is taken for. Like Dubuffet, he was stimulated by *art brut,* but he assimilated Cubism first and took from the "raw" art of children and adults only what Cubist discipline would permit. In effect, Dubuffet has absorbed Cubism through Klee. (Aside from the fact that he probably also absorbed a good deal of it directly, for he first started out as a painter, back in the twenties, under the influence of Picasso, and it was only when he returned to painting at the time of the Occupation, after a long absence, that he appears to have oriented his art toward Klee's).

Dubuffet borrowed from Klee the key with which to unlock the spontaneity in himself—Klee who by no means repudiated tradition and wanted only to create an ampler one for modern art and was able to do so only under the guidance of Cubism. Dubuffet has shown the highest sophistication in using Klee's influence as he has, making it the foundation of an art more monumental than that of any other of the Swiss master's disciples. But in order to do this he had to possess the whole extant culture of painting and all that French art, in particular, had to give in the way of a sensuous and knowing manipulation of paint. I believe that this erudition is self-evident in Dubuffet's art, as is also his very acute and civilized perception of what is and is not relevant to ambitious art in our time. Next to this his talk about *art brut* only confuses the issue.

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Dufuffet's case demonstrates once again that the "primitivism" of which modern art is so frequently accused is in reality something quite different from what it seems. Instead of being a return to a primitive state of mind (whatever that may be), it represents a new evaluation and opening up of the past such as only erudite artists are capable of. The whole surviving past of art, rather than that of Western Europe and classical antiquity alone, has now been made available to contemporary artists. As our painting and sculpture abandon naturalism they find more and more stimulating precedents outside the historical and social orbit of Western culture. They find these in Africa, Asia, Oceania —and here at home and in the present as well: in the impromptu, rudimentary art of novices, amateurs, children, and lunatics.

Dubuffet's and Klee's art crosses social and status lines as high art never did before. It exposes, for the first time to our respectful view, the spontaneous graphic effusions, the *lumpen* art, of the urban lower classes, which Klee and Dubuffet have discovered and given an aesthetic role as Marx discovered and gave the proletariat a political role. And in a way not unlike Marx's, Dubuffet exaggerates the subversiveness of what he has discovered. It is true that most of the art we see scrawled on sidewalks is jeering and that the obscenity of what gets scribbled on lavoratory walls is rather "anti-social." But the beauty these things acquire at Dubuffet's transfiguring hands is so social that they become eligible for the museums, than which there is, of course, nothing less subversive.

Clement Greenberg

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LONDON LETTER

London letters are best written from the provinces. Here the effort of avoiding London is too great; it takes up all our time: avoiding the crowds, the streets, the horror of its busy quarters, the desolation of its empty ones even to avoid the people who are trying to avoid us is quite an art and leaves but little time to learn what is going on. I used to turn first, in the older PARTISAN REVIEW, to the London Letters of Orwell and Koestler, who lived respectively in the Hebrides and North Wales, because from their Celtic fringe they made London more real to me, a Londoner. London is a climate, an atmosphere, a sargasso sea of brick, smoke, feet, faces, historical associations in which we who have lived here for so long are bogged down, unable to enjoy most of its advantages. I have known many areas where one would drive willingly ten, twenty, thirty miles to see a friend or enjoy a good dinner and even further to visit a building or a picture; here it is all a terrible effort. Chelsea, about five miles from where I live, or maybe only two or three (no one seems to know) might be the other end of the world—one hesitates to invite people from so far away or to accept their invitations; St. John's Wood, about half a mile to the north, seems equally remote because of its chilly northern quality. The overcrowding which is the foundation of the exaggerated respect for privacy that controls the English code of manners (and which seems so like rudeness in underpopulated and more hospitable countries) is here at its densest and causes an even stricter code to be observed. Within a five-mile radius of where I sit, live some of the people I have known longest and loved most in the world, and yet I could not drop in on them without ringing up first, and I would hesitate to see any of them more than twice a week. Our manners are based on overcrowding and ill health. Not sickness, but that listless and mildly irritable semi-coma which every true Londoner recognizes as the natural time-obliterating climate of his mind and which causes him to greet old friends who have just returned from vast circumnavigations with a "Hullo — I thought you were going abroad."

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Paris quickens the mind, New York energizes the character, London constipates the soul. We are now in full hibernation. Almost nothing is alive. From where I write I can see through the long twelve-foot windows (what an old-world luxury these are, with their solemn rectangular panes framing the landscape like a squared drawing) on to the tall bare trees in the park, yet not quite bare for the twigs of the wych-elm support a quantity of sparrows who are constantly changing place on the branches like the notes on a pianola roll. And beyond, the whole terrace springs suddenly into light. And what light! Here in the years from 1820 to 1940 curtains would have been drawn, lamps discreetly lit, fires poked, silver teapots poured by gentle hands, the sacred moment of nightfall commemorated by a whole glittering society of business men and retired proconsuls—not of the highest fashion and probably abysmally dull—but still enormously solid, in fact, *there*. And now in all the terraces round the park, in several hundred houses, the lights go on. But now there are no curtains. We can see into every room as we go by. Bare boards as a rule (a carpet is a sign of prestige), three or four desks (two men and a woman) in each partitioned drawing-room, long tubular dazzlingly bright lights suspended over each desk, in every room some painted steel cabinets and a row of six pegs festooned with hats and mufflers. Occasionally crowding in a canteen, but generally huddling together in each room are little groups; tea-cups (no pots visible) in hand; safe, dowdy, and supreme (and in their bill is our peace)—you've guessed it, reader—CIVIL SERVANTS. It was that or pull the whole place down.

Those of us who still live in the Park are actually in the position of Mr. Rock in Henry Green's last novel, *Concluding,* which has created such a stir here. Mr. Rock is a retired scientist of the 1980's occupying a cottage in a park where the big house is now a State girls' school (a school for officials) and whose principals, the Misses Baker and Edge, are determined to evict him: we are not yet quite in that situation for we have already defeated the State who wanted to clip off the lower branches of our maples, guardians of privacy, and to run a pipe through our kitchen. Henry Green, the author of *Concluding* is in public life a successful business man; it is natural that his especial brand of lyrical individualism should lead him to oppose the State, but I am also told that Orwell's new novel, *1984,* has a similar theme and deals with the struggle of two lovers to avoid the State's eugenics laws, etc. What is in fact happening under Socialism is a new alignment of writers against the State, including many writers who voted socialist and whose conscience in matters of social justice is now at last appeased, only to be

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aroused this time by apprehension of their own fate. Most young socialist writers of bourgeois origin carried on a father conflict against Baldwin, Chamberlain and (when it came to voting in the last election) Churchill. Politically minded, progressive, internationalist, militant, the literary movement of the Thirties expressed perfectly the attitude of the bourgeois revolutionary son to his Tory father, secure in his empire, his injustices, his blood sports and vintage ports, his complacency and money bags. With Tory parents socialism was enough (Isherwood); with liberal parents communism was more desirable (Spender). But though the consciousness of social injustice was for many its own reward, there was certainly at the back of our minds a vague idea that the going over to the working class which was in the Thirties a kind of mystical initiation, a hazardous taurobolium, would also, as was the case in Russia, bring more solid rewards. This has not happened. King Stork has shown no favor to those who croaked loudest against King Log. Classical royalist theocratical Eliot receives the O.M., but no decorations are bestowed on such socialist campaigners as Low, the cartoonist, or J. B. Priestley, the playwright broadcaster. The bourgeois revolutionary writers find that for all tax-paying and other political purposes they are counted in with the bourgeoisie, with that professional class who always seems to suffer more in revolutions than any other. In addition the deep instinct of the artist to oppose the existing order, to face against the powerful current like game fish, rather than to wriggle or flounder, begins to operate. The opposition runs the whole gamut from right wing aestheticism (with even some crypto-fascist-dandyism at the universities) through conventional Toryism and academic liberalism to revolutionary anarchism on the extreme left. (The Communist writers are, of course, in opposition too but have not made cause with the rest). The writer feels that socialism is squeezing all the color out of life besides diminishing the individuality of his own personality, threatening his bourgeois independence and leisure and offering him no compensations in return. It is a curious fact that the Government while definitely encouraging the other arts, subsidizing opera and drama, circulating the work of living painters, preserving ancient buildings, has done nothing whatever for literature. The poet has at no time enjoyed more freedom to starve. Meanwhile the socialist writers, so brilliant in opposition, who continue to support the Government, become boring, and we have the extraordinary spectacle of a socialist revolution in full force which has not inspired a single work of art, and whose one effort at spontaneous humanitarian legislation—the abolition by a free vote in the Commons of the death penalty—was immediately rescinded. Last week new laurels were added when

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a woman, Margaret Allen, 36, was hanged at Manchester for murder. One of a family of twenty, she had lived for some of her life as a man and found a happy employment as a trousered bus-conductress. She murdered her neighbor without motive, an elderly woman who came to call ("I wouldn't have done it if I'd had a cigarette") and then tried to throw the body in the river. She continued to wear trousers, smoke, and say nothing throughout the trial and before her execution asked to see her one friend, a younger woman, and told her that she did it "in one of her funny moods." For the execution she was made to abandon her shirt and trousers and dress for the first time in blouse and skirt. One sees at once in this story a resemblance to Camus' short novel, *l'Etranger*, and it is hard not to feel that Margaret Allen's perverse and indifferent attitude might not have hastened her fate. The friend could raise only a hundred signatures to a petition for her reprieve which suggests that the Mancunians are still healthily intolerant of the abnormal. The hanging of women is often accompanied by revolting physical consequences. The last woman to be hanged in this country was Mrs. Thompson in 1926 and the prisoners and wardresses of Holloway still firmly believe that her ghost haunts the block with the condemned cell.

The sudden death of the radio comedian Tommy Handley, however, threw the country and especially the capital into a paroxysm of grief and it was clear that this was one of the things the British really cared about, and not just one of those things the newspapers told them they did. Handley belonged to those humorists, like the cartoonist Giles, or the columnist Nat Gubbins, who enchanted people during the war because they were on their side and not making them laugh to improve morale and to please authority. The impact of his death reveals the strength of the subconscious British revolt against the drabness of our lives and our devotion to those who lighten it. The popularity of the near-criminal ex-Polish "contact" man, Stanley, who was referred to in the proceedings of the Lynskey Tribunal as "the biggest scoundrel unhung" and who was cheered at the Chelsea Arts Ball on New Year's Eve is another symptom of this. On the whole it would be unfair to blame the Labor Government, for it is doubtful if anyone but Sir Stafford Cripps could carry out the economic measures necessary to our pathetic condition as a country who has lost two great wars on the winning side (for that is what it amounts to). In the same way it would be a mistake to assume that the findings of the Lynskey Tribunal, however unfavorable they may prove to the government officials involved, are likely to have much effect on the General Election. For one intellec-

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tual who resents that he cannot go abroad or import foreign pictures or books, for ten professional men who grumble because they are taxed back into the working classes without the working-class consolation of happy unambitious irresponsibility, there are thirty workers whose conditions of life have been radically transformed for the better. In spite of all their efforts the Conservatives have not regained the ear of the people and it is the people and not the farmers or the lawyers or the soldiers who decide an election. South Hammersmith, however, is worth watching as being a desperate effort of the Tory party to break its disastrous sequence of by-election failures.

There hasn't been much to report in the world of the arts, which I hope to deal with in my next letter. Denton Welch died of injuries from an auto accident at thirty-one with his last book of short stories, *The Quick and the Dead,* just out, and a novel nearly finished. He was a promising, no, an accomplished story teller, verbal artist and childhood explorer, with a gift of communicating excitement about himself and a sensual visual quality like Truman Capote's. E. M. Forster, whose novels delighted our parents, became our most unlikely septuagenarian. T. S. Eliot returned with his Nobel Prize check—eleven thousand pounds free of tax—from Sweden.

There are two remarkable art exhibitions. Forty-thousand years of Modern Art (Institute of Contemporary Arts) in which marvellous Negro sculpture from Benin and other works from New Guinea and the Bismarcks put to shame the School of Paris, and the Chantrey bequest collection at the Burlington House. These are pictures bought for the nation since 1870 by a joint committee from the Royal Academy and the Tate. The Tate are in a minority and provoked the exhibition to expose the taste of the Royal Academy. (Many of the most expensive purchases were the work of presidents of the Royal Academy themselves.) The exhibition reveals not only the bankruptcy of English nineteenth century official art, but the strange morbidity of the Victorian psyche.

In this mild "midwinter spring" between Saturnalia and Lupercalia many of our best are out of the country. There is now only one true class distinction: are you rich or eminent enough to winter in America or do you have to remain at home? Before the war anyone with twenty pounds could go to the Mediterranean or take a cheap skiing holiday; now it is New York and Nassau or stay here and hang up your muffler on the peg. But London life is by no means all unpleasure, Partisans, I assure you.

Cyril Connolly

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ROME LETTER

Italy is crowded with *brave persone*. The expression has a meaning much vaguer than the English "good man" or the French *brave homme*. It indicates somebody who in some respect is not bad, or who at some moment has been capable of behaving decently. Ultimately, it may designate a person who has done you a favor. The notion descends, of course, in a straight line from that of the sinner who on the day of Judgment will be saved by a single good deed or instant of atonement. If God the Father is willing to cancel at a glance a whole life of iniquity, we men can live together only by being each other's accomplices in indulgence and forgetfulness, all sinners and all *brave persone*. It is as useless to ask of a man that he be more than a *brava persona* as to demand of a society that it be more than a quiet convention.

It has been said that *avec les bons sentiments on fait les mauvais romans*. In the same way, too many *brave persone* make for a bad society. Too much truth has to be repressed until scandal breaks out.

From the point of view of Italian conformism, war and the end of fascism were huge scandals which ruined the reputation of many *brave persone* (from middle class girls to generals and kings), and from which a lot became known about Italy that had been successfully kept hidden before. An unseemly situation, which a good society cannot tolerate for long. National continuity in Italy is largely entrusted to the ability of prominent people to patch up an official version of past events and hush up scandals. Ordinary people collaborate as best they can, that is in direct proportion to the family income.

Where are, for example, the *signorine*, the flocks of middle class girls who used to go out with Allied soldiers? They have by no means become all whores, as an American Nekhliudov might fancy. Most of them are happily married and have been received with full rights into the vast congregation of the *brave persone*. The middle class ones, that is. For those of the lower classes there are the reformatories. As for the "shoe shines," their unsightly problem has been liquidated by locking them up. Conditions in State reformatories are described in

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the following cautious attempt, on the part of a big circulation weekly, to say "something" about them: "These boys are in good health, they eat fairly well, but their desire to get out of here is strong indeed. So much the more so since many of them have committed no other crime than that of having been abandoned by their parents. Bureaucrats classify them into two categories: the 'morally abandoned' and the 'materially abandoned.' There are many, very many, such cases. There is for example a nine year old boy. He is hardly 3 ft. 3 in. tall, pale, with big rings under his eyes. He has been locked up because his mother charged him with having committed 'unmentionable acts'. . . . . The doctor considered the accusation preposterous. The boy was classified as 'morally abandoned.' He is still there. . . . . "

Then comes politics. The task of hushing up the last five years of Italian history may look discouragingly difficult. Nevertheless, it has been carried on steadily, and not without success, by the keepers of the national flame (who are by no means all fascists). A Roman newspaper devotes a column every day to the most desperate enterprise of all: the rehabilitation of the late Victor Emmanuel. Two years ago, the project would have seemed hopeless. Another Roman paper (circulation: 200,000) has recently published an editorial entitled "Italy Without Sin," maintaining that of all Western Nations it is Italy who has played the most honorable role in the history of the twentieth century. "If Italy has sinned at all," wrote the journalist, "she has sinned out of rashness, and an excess of generosity." Also, two years ago it would have been hard indeed to hold an official celebration of the glories of the Italian army. This year the difficulty has been gotten around by commemorating the Italian victory in World War I while distributing medals to the veterans of World War II (a sprinkle of anti-German heroes was included). Anti-fascist Minister of Defense Pacciardi expounded the thesis that the yardstick of military honor is obedience to orders, not partisanship.

Obedience to orders, and to the claims of that pliable though transcendental entity: the Nation, has been, as everybody knows, the rock on which all the trials of the "war criminals," from Paris to Rome, and from Nuremberg to Tokyo, have run juridically aground. Trusting this well established fact, and Italian forgetfulness, the neo-fascists had hoped to turn the trial of Mussolini's last Marshal, Graziani, not merely into a demonstration that Rodolfo Graziani was, after all, a *brava persona,* but into a real exaltation of the last bloody act of the fascist comedy, the puppet Republic of Northern Italy.

Here one must explain that neo-fascists are characterized by the

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fact that they refuse any responsibility for the fascist regime. Some of them go as far as calling Mussolini "a clown," and a few even repudiate the term "fascist." But they are all very nostalgic about the period immediately prior to October 28, 1922. On the other hand, they proudly defend the main deeds of fascist foreign policy: Ethiopia, Spain, and the declaration of war against France and England. That was not fascism, but Italy, with her "eternal interests." Hence, fascism or no fascism, they consider the Northern Republic as a last desperate stand for the honor of Italy. Here too, however, Italian casuistry seeps into the argument: neo-fascists don't maintain that Hitler's cause was just, they simply insist that Germany was the ally. On the other hand, the British and the French were the enemy, not America. America's "anti-fascist war" was a lamentable misunderstanding for which she is now paying by being forced to take over Mussolini's anti-bolshevist crusade.

In any case, with the morale of what used to be called "anti-fascism" at its lowest after three years of disillusions, neo-fascists thought that the Graziani trial would turn out to be a good prop for their limp cause. After all, Graziani was only a military man, and an Empire builder. He could make a good case for himself. And the scandal of the last fascists, despised by everybody including the Germans whom they unsuccessfully tried to please by slaughtering Italians at random, might eventually be stretched so thin as to be forgotten, or even transformed into a rarefied symbol of some sort.

Once again, however, the Italian fascists' passionate faith in rhetoric, and disdain for awkward details led them astray. The people of the M.S.I. (the "Movimento Sociale Italiano," which is the official organization of the neo-fascists) had reckoned without Graziani's titanic egocentrism. Forced to play the role of the accused in a courtroom after having been a Marshal and a Viceroy (of Ethiopia, in case you have forgotten), Mussolini's last commander-in-chief has been behaving so much like the caricature of an Italian, a general, and a fascist, as to ruin all hopes of drafting him for a symbol. As a matter of fact, one of his first outbursts in court was directed precisely against his admirers, when they started applauding him. "Keep quiet, you fools. Don't you see that you are ruining me?" he yelled.

The judicial rite centered on Graziani has been dragging along for nearly four months. People by now hardly skim the newspaper accounts of the proceedings. But for several weeks the trial was news. At the first session, the ex-Marshal made his entrance into the courtroom hoisting a red silk handkerchief at his waist pocket. "I was never a Fascist," he proclaimed, "all I did, I did only for Italy. For the sake of

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the Fatherland and of Military Honor I would be ready tomorrow to lead even Communist legions on the field of battle." His volunteer supporters were startled. Evidently their idol valued CP neutrality in his trial more than their enthusiasm. (As a matter of fact, in obedience to the line of consistent appeasement of the extreme Right followed by the Party, prominent Communist resistance leaders have scrupulously refrained from taking the stand against Graziani. During the first ten days of the trial, the defense was left entirely free to conduct the hearings, and it looked very much as if Graziani were going to be acquitted after all. The situation was saved by Ferruccio Parri who asked to be heard in his quality of ex-commander in chief of the guerrillas in the North, and submitted to the court a list of over a hundred people who could testify as to the executions, reprisals, and massacres ordered by Graziani, whose line of defense was that he had never done anything against the partisans, only against the British).

Graziani's behavior before his judges has been the opposite of Pétain's. Pétain played deaf and dumb, and hardly budged during the whole procedure. Graziani doesn't do anything but talk, jump up, scream, shut up everybody including his own attorneys, and have fits of rage and self-pity, claiming all the time the right to be taken at his word. He can't stand the witnesses for the prosecution: they just make him mad. But above all, he can't stand being tried. Hence, he cares very little about being consistent, or even dignified, in his defense. The essential fact, the fact that he is His Excellency Rodolfo Graziani (a man who, as he said himself at one point, should be forever "riding my white horse, at the head of my troops"), was ignored the moment he was put under arrest instead of being offered a new title. That was his bad luck, and now he is powerless. All he can do is kick, scream, and suffocate. "Your Honor, you are killing me," he yelled while the presiding judge was cross-examining him. And since the judge was cruel enough not to stop the whole thing with apologies, later on poor Graziani almost burst into tears. "I wish I could appear before the tribunal of the Infant Jesus," he said. When ex-Resistance leaders began to take the stand against him one after the other, listing facts and figures, he became so unmanageable that he had to be expelled from the courtroom. At one point, one of the judges having said something in a muffled voice, the following exchange took place: *Graziani*: "Thank you, Your Honor, for having called me Marshal"—*The Judge*: "You must have misunderstood me. I couldn't give you a title of which you have been legally stripped"—*Graziani*: "Never mind, Your Honor, I shall be a Marshal to my grave."

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As for the rest, the Graziani show derives a certain sociological interest from the fact that Graziani's is a sort of climax of the line of defense taken consistently, and without exception, by all those Italians, from the King to the lowest henchman, who got actively involved in the business of fascism. Namely: first, that it was all the other fellow's fault, while they themselves literally didn't know what they were doing, and couldn't do anything else anyway, hence they can't very well be held responsible; secondly, that things being as bad as they were, they did what they could to make them a little better by dispensing special favors to a number of people.

The funny thing is that there is some (Italian) sense in this nonsense. It's a real apotheosis of the popular notion of the *brava persona.* On the public level, Mussolini, Ciano, Graziani & Co. looked like bastards and fools, let's admit it. But that was not quite *them,* it was the Reason of State and the Interest of the Nation. In March, 1937, for example, Graziani, the Viceroy ordered all priests, soothsayers and peddlers in Ethiopia executed as dangerous conspirators. That was in the interest of the Nation, and in accordance with the customary privileges of the Reason of State. As a person, however, Graziani also distributed generous alms to all poor people in Addis Ababa. "Those people adored me," he told the judges. Shouldn't he get any credit at all for that?

Fascist leaders made a bad mistake in fooling around with History at the exact moment when History was swelling with heretofore unsuspected forces. That's true. But, above all, they had no luck, poor wretches. "It's easy to indict me now, because I have lost," said Graziani, "but in 1943 the Germans still had magnificent secret weapons up their sleeves. They could have won. And if they had won, I would now be a kind of De Gaulle." To put this argument in full relief, one has to add that Graziani has also defended himself by saying that, in 1943 he had no other thought except that of retiring to his estate in the Abbruzzi; that he was physically forced to follow Mussolini, and didn't care a bit either for him or for the Germans; that he was utterly powerless; and, in the same breath, that he "saved Italy."

This theory of the final irresponsibility of the leader, or rather of his right to take responsibility only for success, is typically fascist. But also not a little Italian. It has been the underlying postulate of the acquittal of all the important fascists brought to trial in Italy. If Graziani is not acquitted, it will be because in following Mussolini he unequivocally forswore his oath of allegiance to the King, a legal point that can't be gotten around.

Croce notwhithstanding, Italians don't believe at all in Hegel's

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totalitarian History. They believe in Fortune, and in the proposition that life is above all a private affair. One person tries his luck at being a conqueror, the other at selling fruit. They both can fail. The essential thing is not to be a downright devil, like Hitler. Or an obscene fool, like Brusadelli.

Giulio Brusadelli resembles Graziani in one respect. He, too, has been brought to his ruin by egomania. A seventy-four-year-old Milanese cotton industrialist and stock-jobber, Brusadelli is one of Italy's two hundred billionaires (there are forty of them in Calabria alone, Italy's most disinherited region). In 1931, he got into trouble with the regime for stock-jobbing, but was finally acquitted, a stroke of luck for which he gave all the credit to Saint Rita, to whose tomb he had hastened to make a pilgrimage. Apparently, he never forgave fascism for the scare, since it has been affirmed that, in 1943, he put a hundred million lire at the disposal of the generals who were plotting against Mussolini. The offer was declined because, as a general put it, "what we need right now is not money," meaning that what was needed was the courage to go ahead.

In 1935, Brusadelli had married a 22-year-old girl by the name of Anna, and all went well with him until he got caught in the fierce struggle between the "bears" and the "bulls" which has been going on at the Milan Stock Exchange since 1945. Brusadelli was one of the most prominent "bears." Last October, the "bulls" got him: he lost a billion lire. This he couldn't stand, more as a matter of principle, obviously, than on account of the money itself, since his fortune is evaluated at about thirty billion. He consulted with his lawyer and did something desperate. He asked for the legal annulment of the transaction which was at the origin of the loss, under pretext that he had been tricked into it by his wife working with his enemies. In order to deprive him of his clearmindedness, Brusadelli claimed, the woman had used the most irresistible means at her disposal against him: her sexual charms. Young Anna was a sexual monster, a witch, and a vampire, said the legal complaint. As circumstantial evidence, Brusadelli submitted to the judge a minute description of the different kinds of sexual labors to which he had been forced to submit, plus a batch of photographs and a pile of obscene books that were supposedly used in the process of getting the last ounce of free will out of his aging body.

The judge had almost conceded Brusadelli his point when the newspapers got hold of the story. The scandal was terrific. Few men had ever been as ill advised as this plutocrat. For three years, Italians had been muttering about the Milanese billionaires and speculators, who

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had the Government at their beck and call, who kept the lira at the mercy of their operations with the dollar or the Swiss franc, and who, in addition to this, were blithely ignorant of the existence of the tax collector. Nothing had been done about them, and the newspapers had been slowly giving up the struggle, when, all of a sudden, Brusadelli's action drew the attention of the whole country to the issue in the most clamorous farcical way imaginable. The move was so barefaced that people couldn't even laugh at it. They just gaped.

With unbounded faith in his own power and glory, Brusadelli seemed to have forgotten that, after all, Italy is under Christian Democratic rule. Demochristian ministers could close an eye on tax evasion, but hardly on obscenity. The Government had to intervene. A special Commissioner was dispatched to Milan, with orders to seize Brusadelli's property and to investigate his income tax returns. It turned out that the billionaire was paying taxes on an income of about two million lire. This, by the way, implied considerable absentmindedness on the part of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, since taxes in Italy are not based on individual declarations but on the tax collector's appraisal of the citizens' income.

Public opinion demanded a thorough cleanup of the Milanese billionaires. It was pointed out that this could bring the State a sum amounting to more than a year of Marshall Plan allocations. The government, however, didn't see why it should get into unnecessary trouble with the Stock Exchange, and preferred to stick to Brusadelli. The reckless "bear" had no choice but to lie low for a while, letting his accountants and lawyers take care of the defense of his patrimony. Yet, with the national outcry about him calming down day by day, Brusadelli could stand less and less the role of the scapegoat. If he had to pay, the others, especially the "bulls," had to pay too. At present, rumor has it that he has been handing out data to the Stalinists on his rivals' tax returns. It is the operation which the French call "drowning the fish." If the government really intends to hurt Brusadelli, it will have to hurt about fifty other powerful financiers. And before hurting them, it will have to think twice. Parallel to this operation, the litigious old man has been conducting another one, that of making up with his wife by insisting that he was actually out of his mind when he accused her of willful lechery. The scandal seems to be on its way out. In a few months, Brusadelli may well be known again as a *brava persona*. He has already declared that the only thing he really cares for in life is the devotion his workers showed him in his hour of trial. And he has just made another pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Rita.

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Desdemona Palombi has no point of contact whatsoever with Brusadelli, except that it might have been better for her to have been the maid of the Milanese nabob than of a middleclass lady.

It is hard for people who haven't lived in Italy to understand the social situation and role of the vast number of peasant girls who come to town to serve as maids. Italy boasts of being the only country in Europe where serfdom was abolished by the twelfth century. This fact was at the origin of that wonderful Italian achievement, the city state. However, the absence of serfdom has never prevented Italian society from being divided, with the encouragement of the Church, into two vast classes: the "superior" and the "inferior." The distinction consists mainly in this, that the first have rights that the second don't have. The nature of these rights is not a matter of law but rather of adjustment to varying historical conditions. The question is not so much for the "superiors" to maintain at all costs certain specific privileges, but rather that the distinction itself be maintained, in other words that there will always be "inferiors." Otherwise there would be "anarchy." Eventually, the distinction boils down to that between the "rich" and the "poor," the "cultivated" and the "ignorant," and it is maintained, thanks to the habit of taking for granted the principle that there should always be people who are poor and ignorant. The idea that "superior" people have a right to an education and "inferior" people don't is the one most consistently maintained by Italian society to this date.

There has been progress, in Italy, and the mass of people who can actually be treated as inferiors has dwindled considerably. Industrial workers, for example, have gained a special status, and the number of peasants who own their land has increased. This has caused considerable distress among the "superiors," especially among the middleclass, who no longer know where they stand in the matter of superiority. There is little that can be done about it, however, since even fascism ended in "socialism." The only mass of "inferiors" that's left to prevent social order from sinking into sheer chaos are the poor peasants and their daughters, the maids.

Let's not dramatize. The maids' serfdom is not economic so much as moral. They get room and board, a small salary (the equivalent of ten to fifteen dollars a month), and days off to go out with their fiancés. Being, as they generally are, simpleminded romantic girls who do not expect from life more than a few daydreams, the maids could be moderately happy. What makes the existence of most of them a torture is the galling ambiguity of their position. They are supposed to be at the same time blind instruments and members of the family they serve. Their

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greatest sin is to behave like hired workers, since that means that they are not grateful for having been adopted as it were. Hence, there is no limit to the exertions their mistressess can impose on them, except mercy. On the other hand, if they become attached to the family in which they live (as is often the case, since the "inferiors," in Italy, dream passionately of establishing a sentimental relation with the "superiors"), that's part of their duty, and simply means that they are aware of their inferiority. They may even get some signs of affection in return, but in no case a true recognition of their personality. They remain forever, in the eyes of their masters, poor ignorant women whose instincts are too uneducated to be fully trusted. In well-to-do families things are not so bad, since they care only for efficient service and little or nothing for the personality of their maids. But few situations resemble hell so closely as the life of a maid who has to be a part of the narrow and mean existence of the family of a miserably paid civil servant.

To go back to Desdemona Palombi. She was a twenty-five year old girl from Frosinone in the service of a small Roman businessman. One day, her mistress discovered that a diamond ring worth about two hundred dollars was missing from her drawer. She promptly called the police. As a matter of the simplest routine, the *carabinieri* arrested Desdemona. Three days later, the papers announced that, having been accused of stealing, a maid had committed suicide in her cell by setting fire to her clothes. The case looked mysterious. When newspapermen went to the hospital where the dying girl had been taken, they found that the page where Desdemona's admission was recorded had been torn from the hospital's register. The doctors had said that the girl's burns were serious, but didn't look mortal. The *carabinieri* asserted that before killing herself in that gruesome way, Desdemona had made a full confession. There was no signed document, however. As for the girl's mistress, she was quick to announce that she had only reported the loss of the ring and had said nothing to accuse Desdemona, who in her opinion was a good girl. Why then she had let the girl be arrested she didn't explain.

Roman newspapers played up the story with big headlines. The outcry was fierce. In the eyes of the simple people of Rome the case was crystal clear: Desdemona was a heroic martyr of her condition, her death a supreme gesture of protest against the implacable course of social determinism. Automatically accused, and automatically condemned, Desdemona could have gotten away after a few months in jail. But her ancient Roman sense of honor made her prefer a horrible death to shame. Desdemona Palombi's funeral cortege was followed by a mass of poor people. In passing the police station that had been the theater

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of Desdemona's despair, the people got so threatening that the panicky *carabinieri* captain, in an effort to appease them, made a curious gesture. He called out his troops, and gave the order to present arms to the maid's coffin, just as if she had been a State dignitary.

The commonly accepted hypothesis about Desdemona's death was that the police had driven the poor maid crazy by third degree methods, and gotten a confession which she later felt she could erase only by dying. That left several details to be explained: the manner of the suicide; the fact that the *carabinieri* could let the girl burn herself to death without any of them realizing what was happening; the missing hospital records. The case was brought before Parliament. The Minister of Police has promised an investigation. After which, nobody expects to hear anything more about Desdemona Palombi. She may have been a good girl, but since she did not belong to the class from which *brave persone* are drawn she obviously was in no position to bear the brunt of scandal.

Italy's Big Two, the Catholics and the Stalinists, show no eagerness to follow up scandals in any case. A diffused fear seems to be in the air that once you start calling things by their name, some awful mixup might ensue, and too many cats be let out of too many bags. Hence, the most rabid polemics are accompanied by a singular lack of concrete references. A spade may be called "an instrument of imperialistic aggression" or "a treacherous bolshevist weapon," but never just a spade. An outstanding example of this tendency is the furious controversy between the Stalinist press and the *Osservatore Romano* about Cardinal Mindszenty. The Stalinists call their victim a fascist, a spy, and a black marketeer, knowing perfectly well that these are obligatory metaphors and lies, and that the real point of the question is elsewhere. On the other hand, they insist that they have nothing whatsoever against the clergy, the Church, or religion, in fact that they are good Catholics, or nearly so. The Vatican organ, on its part, spends most of its energy in refusing obvious Stalinist slander against Mindszenty, while at the same time maintaining that the Cardinal was perfectly ready to get along with the Hungarian progressive democratic State (which is obviously false). A naive observer might be led to conclude that, if this is how the matter really stands, and if no irreconcilable struggle between two totalitarian powers is involved, then neither side would want the scandal to be irreparable, and maybe the whole Mindszenty affair is only a violent search for compromise.

At this point, an Italian is reminded of what happened last December, when Stalinist Senator Spano challenged to a public debate

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Jesuit Father Lombardi, also known as "The Flying Jesuit" and "God's Microphone." Father Lombardi answered Senator Spano that he was ready to take up the challenge, but that, since he was well aware of the way Communists conduct their public arguments, the rhetorical bout would have to take place on his own conditions, namely in a closed space, before forty people, half of them picked by himself and half by Senator Spano; he would introduce the subject (Christianity vs. Communism) with a thirty minute talk; Senator Spano would have thirty minutes to answer him and Father Lombardi would have the right to retort for fifteen minutes. The meeting would be broadcast over the national network. At this point, the Stalinist must have known that he had already been forced into an inferior position. First of all, he had explicitly conceded the priest's contemptuous contention that a Communist didn't deserve the honor of a free debate; secondly, he had hoped for a mass meeting with fiery appeals to the misery of the masses, and now the whole show had become the rhetorical equivalent of one of those duels that are still the fashion in Italy, in which neither adversary can possibly get hurt and the only question is which of the two looks more foolish. But it was too late to withdraw, and moreover Senator Spano was not a little flattered by the thought of crossing ideological swords with the famous Jesuit. Newspaper pictures of the event showed a beamingly self conscious Spano at the side of a formal and impassive Lombardi. Except for the priest's attire, the scene looked very much like the meeting of the silly little Social Democrat and the perfect Stalinist.

As for the argument itself, it went like this: Father Lombardi said that the Communists are materialistic and believe in evolution, and that everything good in Communist theory comes from Christianity. To which Spano retorted that he didn't mind descending from a monkey; that Communism does not oppose true Christianity but reactionary clericalism, and that the Church today is not faithful to the Gospel. At one moment, turning to Lombardi, the senator said: "*Your* teacher Jesus . . . . " then quickly corrected himself: "*Our* teacher Jesus, I mean. . . . " And so on and so forth. The game was dull, its outcome a stalemate. Right after the end, however, Father Lombardi had a stroke of Jesuitical genius: drawing his brother-in-Christ Spano to his bosom, he kissed him on both cheeks and with that carried the day. Of those kisses the Senator's cheeks "will ne'er be clean."

Nicola Chiaromonte

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BOOKS

PERSPECTIVES ON KEATS

THE KEATS CIRCLE: Letters and Papers: 1816-1878. Edited by Hyder Edward Rollins. Two Volumes. Harvard University Press. $12.50.

I wish I could believe that the present patiently edited collection of letters is of immense importance to the reading and understanding of Keats's poetry. But the truth is that I cannot. The great majority of the letters published in two handsomely annotated volumes, and most of which have never been seen in the light of print before, were written by people of good, no, excellent intentions. They wished Keats well; they were humane people, business men, lawyers, journalists, painters physicians, curates, and Keats's publisher, all typical figures of early nineteenth century London, joined by their common interest in a young poet who was dying of a "consumption"—and most, if not all, were men of mediocre minds and accomplishments. That was the composition of "the Keats circle"; and it is all too obvious that if Keats had not been the poet that he was, these letters would have been lost, and not held in the Harvard Keats Collection in the new Houghton Library for Hyder Edward Rollins to edit and present between the covers of two books. The importance of these two volumes turns upon Keats's existing reputation, and from this axis, we are carried, obliquely, it is true, to a revaluation of Keats's poetry.

Scholarship and criticism of the past twenty years has not been kind to the British Romantics of the early nineteenth century, yet the figures of Keats and Wordsworth, and latterly, Coleridge, have escaped severest censure, and their academic positions in British and American universities have remained relatively secure. In Keats's case, and as recently as 1939, a fine and definitive edition of Keats's "Political Works," edited by H. W. Garrod was issued by the Oxford University Press. As an object of study (which is not the same as actually reading and understanding it) Keats's verse at its best quickly responds to academic treatment or analysis. As they are made the subjects of class-room interpretation, the closely woven texture of Keats's imagery and its continuity, lead the in-

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structor, if not the student, to believe that something has been accomplished and that a full day's work is done. And young instructors who have not willingly read a poem in their lives, who are philologists at heart, and who can recite "A Glossary of the New Criticism,"* are able to reduce the lines "To Autumn" into the jargon of current academic English within half an hour.

So far, the actual nature of Keats's poetry remains untouched by twentieth-century evaluations of its kind and quality; the nearest approach to viewing Keats's verse in a new light (and without loss to its value as poetry) may be found in D. H. Lawrence's essay on "The Nightingale" which was published in 1927, and beyond that essay, little of pertinent or lasting commentary has been written. The approach to Keats's poetry has been darkened by a sentimental reversal of the attacks showered upon him by the Scotch reviewers, the details of which have their latest echoes in the present two volumes of letters. But the time has arrived to go beyond the usual paths of inquiry and interpretation—it is not enough to grant that Keats's claims to being a poet are still valid.

We should admit that the range of Keats's experience, as it is reflected in his poetry, is small, and in time, extremely brief, and that the texture of his writing and what he had to say have their likeness in Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis" and certain passages of "Romeo and Juliet." It is clearly the poetry written by a gifted young man, a nineteenth-century Londoner, when Hampstead was a heath and not a park, who ambitiously and rightly chose British Renaissance models of verse for composition. More than that, his eyes saw the world in Renaissance perspective; his visual imagination selected and arranged its figures and objects in Renaissance order. It is an appropriate accident (since the illustration was chosen to show how closely Fanny Brawne resembled "the girl in the white dress") that a detail of Titian's "Sacred and Profane Love" is reproduced among the letters of the Keats circle. The very "inscape," as Hopkins would call it, of Keats's poetry is of Renaissance coloring, depth and richness. The individual will that Keats possessed, which did not inspire his verse, yet freed him from self-pity, raised him above the mediocrities who were his friends, as well as above a dubious family of inn and stable keepers, is the "free will"

* I refer the reader to "A Glossary of the New Criticism" (*Poetry*, Chicago, January, 1949) which reveals a language (not English) but one that is both less logical and less graceful when read aloud than Esperanto. The only excuse for reading it at all is that it increases by accidental contrast an appreciation for the lyrical passages and wit of James Joyce's "Finnegans Wake."

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of Renaissance man, and which in Keats's day, had become the will of the British middle class.

The ideal reader of Keats's major poems is one who is between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one, ages at which the rediscovery of the senses, and the discovery of self become all important; to this particular reader Keats has much to say; the music that is overheard within his lines and the light that seems to shine between them, lose none of their heightened sensibility by being related, as they are, to unamed sexual terms. The proximity of death in Keats's odes and later lyrics is disassociated from the presence of old age; in them the thought of death is properly melancholy, death as the young might feel it in the passage of time and in the enjoyment of the moment that cannot return—it is certainly not as Shakespeare views it in *King Lear,* or as W. B. Yeats advances toward it in his later poems. The older reader of Keats brings more experience to a reading of Keats's lines than he is likely to get from them; to him the pleasure is of less immediacy, and if he is sentimentally inclined, the very sensuousness of Keats's music and visual imagery will restore the memory of the unhappy and fortunate moments of lost youth: under this spell he becomes tempted to forgive Keats's errors in taste and diction, and to forgive his own lapses in Keats's name is a form of self-flattery too attractive to be lightly thrust aside.

The immediacy of Keats's charm to youthful emotions and his creation of a Renaissance world, almost literally, within the province of his verse, places his poetry at measurable distance from the kinds of poetry that are being written today. His example is one that does not permit literal imitation, but rather, one of devotion of the poet to his art. His own letters, recently re-edited by M. Buxton Forman and the letters of the Keats circle show how that devotion brought him friends and an immortality, a moral which scarcely needs reiteration here. Of the friends, it might well be added, that only one, John Hamilton Reynolds, served him with evident and sensible advice by convincing him he had better cancel an ill-written preface to "Endymion." Of the many friends, though Keats had begged them to go with him, only one, the shrewd, light-hearted, tactful, ungifted young painter, Joseph Severn, accompanied the dying poet to Italy, and he thereby gained an immortality of his own, which he enjoyed for more than half a century when he died at the age of eighty-six in 1879.

Horace Gregory

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CEZANNE: THE LIFE AND THE WORK

PAUL CEZANNE. By John Rewald. Simon and Schuster. $5.00.

This could be described as an "efficient" biography of Cézanne, and in doing so one would wish to suggest all the unimpassioned and colorless industry usually associated with the word. Whether the book also merits in any significant sense the additional word "useful" is a debatable question, but that it will have its uses may be conceded at once. It is, one would say, a handy book to have around to verify a date or offer excerpts from original documents. Mr. Rewald is quite insistent on his book's ability to perform this latter function. He says in the introduction:

It presents another attempt to let facts speak for themselves, to rely chiefly on documents and witness accounts, to quote from the originals whenever possible, and thus bring the reader into direct contact with the historic evidence. It again assigns to the author mainly the role of coordinating this evidence and presenting it in the most effective and also the most scrupulously exact way.

With most of this statement most readers would be in agreement; nevetherless, some of the book's chief faults are explained by several assumptions that are implicit in this announcement of intentions. Behind the commendable concern for accuracy and esteem for evidence, there is a strong "scientific" bias, a prejudice for "facts" as unmistakable as Thomas Gradgrind's. Although Mr. Rewald's volume is based on work he did at the Sorbonne, in this respect it is representative of a good deal of recent American scholarship and criticism. The assumption that "facts speak for themselves" is *only* an assumption where biography and criticism are concerned, and one cannot help noticing in the present case that precisely those little facts which are least important—which may, indeed, be quite misleading for the complete picture—are the ones that prove, among the documents and letters, to have the most raucous voices. To achieve the right proportions and relationships something more than a coordinating agent is required. Mr. Rewald's book leaves one with the impression that Cézanne was "unhygienic" (the word literally stares one down), much given to cursing and vulgar language, and had exceptionally boorish manners. These things are undoubtedly true in some degree, but they are not the truth that one wishes to be left with in the case of Cézanne. It is Mr. Rewald's failure to grasp—or more probably his determination not to grasp—Cézanne as a rounded personality that permits this distortion of emphasis. A true biography is not only the result of critically sifted and properly coordinated evi-

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dence, it is also the result of intuition and imagination. But Mr. Rewald's conception of his function as a coordinator is too exclusive and mechanical to tolerate the intrusion of any such qualities. In the end the reader is successfully insulated against any appeal in Cézanne's personality. But we know that Cézanne's personality was, in its way, attractive, from Ambroise Vollard's delightful little biography which, sketchy and incomplete as it is, provides us with an intimate sense of Cézanne's reality as a person that no amount of documentation can achieve.

But in justice one should remember that the biographer of Cézanne is presented with an unusual difficulty. The problem is how to separate the life and its events from the painting which imparted significance to those events. Imperceptibly a life of Cézanne *must* merge into a critique of his work, for it is there that his life is centered and defined. Any attempt to effect a working separation between the two leaves Cézanne a singularly anonymous personality, and Mr. Rewald allows the painting to recede too far into the background. It is not that he gives it too little space, or that he shows himself unknowing when he speaks of the paintings. It is simply that he never manages to seem interested or to arouse interest in Cézanne's pictures; and while giving all the facts, he yet fails to convey adequately any idea of Cézanne's own intensity towards his art. Perhaps, after all, it is not odd that the critical analyses of Roger Fry or Albert Barnes make Cézanne seem more intimately present in the imagination than all the factual data which Mr. Rewald presents with such scrupulous accuracy.

But on one point it is easy to grow enthusiastic. Mr. Rewald has made a fine selection of photographs of the countryside Cézanne painted, and of the houses he lived in. Frequently he has reproduced one of Cézanne's paintings beside a photograph of the same subject, and the comparison afforded is extremely interesting. The method proves to be one of the best ways of looking at and studying the paintings themselves.

Marius Bewley

PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM

THEORY OF LITERATURE. By René Wellek and Austin Warren. Harcourt, Brace, and Co. $4.50.

This is both an ambitious and an impressive book. Mr. Wellek and Mr. Warren have managed to ask virtually all the difficult questions that interest literary critics and literary scholars in our period; and in answering them—or better, in suggesting modest and tentative answers—

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they have not only drawn on a very uncommon erudition but, on the whole, they have refused to be caught on the horns of any of the pseudo-dilemmas that are as nearly all-over-the-place today as they have always been.

The book takes a wide circuit. It is what its title indicates, a serious attempt to sketch the general outlines of a literary theory such as, the authors justly point out, should be basic for any self-respecting body of literary criticism and literary history. The questions they ask are therefore of a genuinely theoretical and fundamental sort. What, philosophically speaking, is a literary work? What kind of existence may it be said to have? What is its ontological status? Does such a work have an absolutely unique existence, or can it be related to other works without losing its true identity? Does it have any genuine analogies with individual works in the other arts?—and in general are there real analogies between literature and music, literature and the plastic arts? Can individual literary works be referred to categories—types or genres—that have a validity of their own for criticism and history? *Is* a history of literature, indeed, possible—a history of literature that is not merely a belletristic substitute for intellectual and social history? Are there real and important connections between literature and philosophy, literature and "ideas" generally? Are there real and important connections between literature and social history? What, if any, is the bearing on literary theory and practice of the knowledges of the social sciences, especially psychology?

These are some of the questions the authors ask; within the limits of a short review it is hardly possible to do more than hint at the character their answers take. At their best, and with some lapses, these answers successfully avoid the antithetical pitfalls of Realism and Nominalism, of purism and reductionism, of absolute idealism and a viciously relativistic positivism. As over against these false simplifications —all of which are in lively existence among us—they defend what they call, usefully I think, Perspectivism, or more exactly, in phrases they borrow from other writers, "perspective realism" or "objective relativism." It is a principle, I should say, wholly consistent with the best thought of a period that, *at* its best, has put aside both the old absolutes of transcendentalism and the old materialistic relativities, and substituted for them such concepts as *field, configuration, organism, event,* and *process.* In the right sense, it is surely a humanistic-naturalistic principle.

It is used, at any rate, by these authors to describe a work of literature as neither, on the one hand, a timeless, placeless essence, nor, on the other, a mere sum of successive individual readings, but as "a structure

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of norms, realized only partially in the actual experience of its many readers." And so, when they approach the question of evaluation, they reject both the appeal to absolute and transcendental standards and the subjectivist surrender of all serious values, and remark: "The valuing of the poem is the experiencing, the realization, of aesthetically valuable qualities and relationships structurally present in the poem for any competent reader." So, again, with the question of genres; they insist, on the one hand, that "the literary kind is not a mere name," and on the other deny that "types" and "forms" have the kind of absolute objectivity they were once alleged to have: "genre should be conceived, we think, as a grouping of literary works based, theoretically, upon both outer form . . . and also upon inner form." And they wisely recommend that more attention be given to this question of genres than has recently been given.

In this flexible and experimental spirit Mr. Wellek and Mr. Warren deal with almost all the topics they raise. They are concerned throughout to insist on the sharp individuality of the particular work of literature—and on the idiosyncratic character of literature itself as compared with other human activities—but they rightly deny that individuality means complete particularity and uniqueness, and that idiosyncrasy means a transcendental independence of all external relationships. By taking such a position they can, for example, discuss the question of literary *history* with a suppleness and a cogency that have become rarer and rarer. The best critical thought of the last twenty or thirty years has been so intensely concentrated on formalistic and verbal analysis that the very concept of literary history might seem to have gone into the discard once and for all. And not unnaturally, since our very few examples of the type in this country have been either histories-of-ideas in disguise or histories of the literary *life* in personal and quasi-fictional form. Yet unless one is to take the puristic view that the interrelations of literary works have no real existence, a return to the interest in literary history would seem well overdue: as these authors remark, a serious literary criticism or theory of literature *without* history is inconceivable; the three forms implicate each other at every turn.

Inevitably, in a book devoted to such tough questions, there will be lapses from perfect coherence and even from real persuasiveness. The chapter on Literature and Psychology, for example, seems to me the least satisfactory; the distinction between psychology *in* literature and psychology *on* literature is not carefully maintained, and more important, the enormous value and interest that depth psychology has for the literary student is much understated. Freudian insights have often been

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bunglingly applied to literary problems, but this can happen and has happened with insights of all sorts—mystical insights, let us say—and the fact is that some knowledge of analytical psychology has now become indispensable. Elsewhere the authors seem to me to be inconsistent with *their* best insights when they deal so indulgently as they do with formalistic criticism. For one thing the word "formalistic" itself is a nuisance: it simply perpetuates the old mechanical distinction between form and substance that this book itself rejects (in favor of a better distinction), and for another, the kind of criticism it points to has for the present almost exhausted its usefulness. It is well enough to say that pure exegesis itself implies a judgment of value: this is too close to the self-defense put up by the pedantic sort of literary scholar who justifies his devotion to the most arid subjects on the ground that this, too, implies a judgment of value. Neither the one nor the other can be excused from the obligation to make these judgments candid and explicit.

These, however, are relatively minor reservations to make in one's hearty appreciation of a volume, on the whole, so studious, so painstaking, so instructed, and so helpful in every way as this. Among other things, it points straight in the direction of that authoritative Cyclopaedia of Literary Criticism toward which so many of us have been looking.

Newton Arvin

EXISTENTIALISM AND RELIGION

EXISTENCE AND THE EXISTENT. By Jacques Maritain. Translated by Lewis Galantière and Gerald B. Phelan. Pantheon, New York. $3.00.

According to M. Maritain, Thomism is an "existentialist" philosophy: what is more, it is the only philosophy that represents "authentic" existentialism. On the other hand, philosophical theories now current under the label of existentialism have no right to this designation; the existentialism they represent is "apocryphal."

How does the author arrive at this verdict? First, he defines the principle of existentialism as the one asserting the primacy of "existence" over "essence." Existentialism in this sense means the rejection of all "essentialist" philosophies, the prototype of which is Platonism, and which assert the primacy of essence over existence. The next step consists in showing that a Catholic philosophy must side with existentialism so defined, since if we hold that only "essences" or "ideas" possess pre-eminent being and truth, there will be no room for belief in God, Creator of existents whom He loves and who love Him. M. Maritain

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feels, however, that one can go too far in asserting the existentialist principle. Thus, all rational knowledge and all philosophy is bound to collapse if one rejects essences and essential truths altogether, instead of merely treating them as somehow relative and subordinate to existence and existential truths. But this is precisely what contemporary existentialism is doing. It tries to build philosophy upon the concept of existence alone, without conjoining that of essence to it; but it appears that if existence is so radically divorced from essence, it becomes vacuous itself. Without essence, there can be no true existence; hence an existentialism which rejects essences and essential truths can be no true existentialism. "The very name of existentialism is, as regards atheistic existentialism, a name usurped."

The message of contemporary, atheistic existentialism reduces to pure nihilism according to the author. Its gist is that "I exist but I am nothing, that man exists but there is no human nature." It pretends to exalt liberty above everything, but since its liberty is "uprooted from reason," it has become invalidated.

The existentialists destroy ethics, since "they reject the ethical universal along with all essence . . . they wantonly repudiate it with the pleasure of barbarians and they know not what they do." They destroy the basis of inter-personal communications: "They do not see that, even before the exercise of free choice, and in order to make free choice possible, the most deeply rooted of the intelligence, and with *others* by the affective union. Their subjectivity is not a *self*, because it is wholly phenomenal."

Not all modern, non-Thomist existentialism is included in this condemnation. M. Maritain distinguishes between the "existential existentialism" of religious thinkers and poets like Kierkegaard, Kafka and Shestov (the latter's name, by the way, is incorrectly transliterated in the English text) on the one hand, and the "academic existentialism" of philosophers like Sartre and Heidegger, on the other. He describes "existential existentialism" as "an essentially religious irruption and claim, an agony of faith, the cry of subjectivity towards its God," and he has all sympathy with it as religious manifestation. But he refuses to accept "existential existentialism" as valid philosophy, or, indeed, as philosophy at all, because it devalues the intellect completely in favor of the irrational movement of faith. For M. Maritain, philosophy can exist only in the medium of the intellect.

As to "academic existentialism," it too devalues intellect, but not in order to exalt faith; thus, it is also non-existent as a philosophy, but without any saving grace. Its only result is "a philosophical destruction of

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the intellect . . . a philosophical art of ideological proliferations of the absurd, cleverly barricaded behind Freudian analyses and phenomenological parentheses, and a complete philosophical liquidation of the basic realities and radical claims of the person and subjectivity."

M. Maritain's book contains a good deal more than this indictment of atheistic existentialism. He gives a reasoned account of the Thomist position with regard to such categories as existence, being, action and freedom. His passionate and severe meditations center around the specific problem of all Thomist philosophy, that of reconciling the autonomy of rational human intellect with the exigencies of super-intellectual faith. He is thoroughly convinced, not indeed of having solved this problem once and for all (he is too sincere a thinker not to be aware of pitfalls inherent in all systematizations), but of the necessity of solving it; for, according to him, neither freedom nor civilized human life is possible on any other basis. The attack upon existentialism is incidental to this positive belief held by M. Maritain.

Existentialism serves here as a foil to true (Thomist) philosophy; it is not analyzed as a phenomenon in its own right. M. Maritain's own thinking is too firmly anchored to such scholastic categories as *esse, existentia, essentia, act, potency,* etc., to make it possible for him to recognize that a different approach would be necessary to understand what a thinker like Heidegger, for instance, is aiming at. The point of Heidegger's philosophy is by no means the denial of essences and essential truths, as M. Maritain suggests; he rejects metaphysics not as something untrue but as something beyond which philosophy must penetrate in order to capture the ultimate, Being itself, at the moment of its first manifestation. This may be an impossible undertaking, but it is not a nihilistic one. And similarly with inter-personal communication: the statement quoted above could have been made in literally identical terms by Karl Jaspers.

Much of what M. Maritain says about existentialism is true of Sartre because Sartre combines existentialism with a curious Hegelian brand of metaphysics. (Incidentally, M. Maritain detects this relationship with Hegel with great perspicacity.) Modern existentialism started as a revolt against Hegel, and Hegelian admixtures are alien to its original message.

Since I have not seen the original, I cannot appraise the translation as such; considered merely as a piece of English philosophical prose, it is remarkably clear and crisp indeed.

Paul Kecskemeti

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MIRO AND MODERN ART

JOAN MIRO. By Clement Greenberg. Quadrangle Press. $10.00.

Miró is, in a sense, the first Imagist in modern painting. The Imagists fixed on exactitude, precision, bareness of statement as methods for dealing with a carefully defined and controlled subject matter that would result in "signs of something" (Miró's term). Miró has arrived at painterly equivalents that permit him to create works which, in their purity and immediacy, never go beyond themselves, that adhere, like a successful Imagist poem, to the business at hand. The separated, scattered, and alienated objects that inhabit his canvases—men, women, moons and stars—are a series of sub-images grouped to form a brilliant major image. Until Miró, no other painter worked in quite this way. Picasso is continually referring to models, rooms, architecture, events, particular identities. Matisse is similarly tied down to the specific interior, the specific figure, however freely he may deal with them. Klee sometimes approached the method, but in Klee there is a not infrequent suggestion, present or lurking, of the symbolization of the whimsical, the pathetic, or the ineffable, and the continual suggestion that the title of a work will add something, not only to one's understanding of the painting, but to the painting itself. On the other hand, most of Miró's titles are, except to the most aggressively dense museum directors, superfluous. All Miró's work of recent years deals with the refinements and regroupings of a carefully selected stock company of images, intensified until the painting and the poetry are inseparable. They do not lend themselves to the making of large statements. They are merely, at their best, perfect. This method was slow in evolving, and Clement Greenberg has put together an excellent book, beautifully presented and containing over one hundred reproductions, with six color plates, tracing its beginnings and developments. Not only does this volume sum up the shockingly scant literature on Miró, but it provides a full-dress occasion for the operation of Greenberg's analysis, which heretofore has not been put to work on an individual painter in so detailed and extended a manner. Freed from the commitments that accompany the reviewing of reputations still unfixed, Greenberg writes here with greater persuasion and density, and with what one might have predicted in advance—an absence of those mixed reproofs, shiftings, and assured pinnings of blue ribbons that must necessarily, I suppose, mark the work of the only American critic regularly, seriously and ambitiously engaged in evaluating contemporary painting.

I can only suggest briefly the range of Mr. Greenberg's concerns:

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a detailed account of the influence on Miró of his early teachers, of Fauvism, *Art Nouveau,* Cubism, Surrealism, and his native Catalonian art; Miró's relationship to hedonism and the grotesque; the role of France, along with internationalizing artists of every country, in nourishing such artists as the Spaniards Picasso and Miró. (Sometime it might be a good idea to reverse the roles, emphasizing what the Spaniards and other non-French artists brought to the international style, and assess what is left.) There are penetrating, but for my liking, overbrief, analyses of Miró's successive manners and of numerous individual paintings.

Greenberg is in general so good on Miró's painting that his remarks on Miró himself seem gratuitous and ill-considered. He refers, near the end of his essay, to the artist on the occasion of his visit to New York in 1947. "Those who had the opportunity to meet Miró while he was here," writes Greenberg, "saw a short, compact, rather dapper man in a dark blue business suit. . . . He is slightly nervous and at the same time impersonal in the company of strangers, and his conversation and manner are non-committal to an extreme. One asked oneself what could have brought this bourgeois to modern painting, the Left Bank, and Surrealism." Others who had the opportunity to meet Miró saw a man equally short, compact, rather dapper, and with a distinctive military bearing, who wore a pin-stripe suit, a violet shirt, a brilliant red and green tie of South American origin with lines that suggested those of his own paintings, and an expensive pair of pointed cinnamon-colored shoes of soft suede. I found him not "slightly nervous" at all, but extraordinarily so, and markedly non-bourgeois in his social behavior. He struck me as lonely, socially uncertain, and so intensively and exclusively an artist that only in painting is he able to find a genuine existence—one to whom the conventional demands of social life are of the slightest concern. Indeed, on more than one occasion during his New York visit, Miró's silence and indifference provided some genuine and bona-fide bourgeois', who are by more than anything repelled by those who refuse to communicate or *fit in,* with moments of real discomfort. The issue suggests the remarks of Valéry on La Fontaine:

> Who could be more misleading than those truthful men who confine themselves to telling what they saw, as if we had seen it ourselves. . . . One of the most serious and logical men I ever knew generally appeared to be the soul of levity; a second nature clothed him with nonsense. And our minds are like our bodies in this respect: whatever they feel to be most important, they wrap in mystery and hide from themselves; they distinguish and defend it by placing it at a depth.

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This rather interpolated concern of Greenberg's with Miró's personality seems to me the one serious flaw in a monograph that is otherwise, both in its text and choice of reproductions, one of the best summaries of a modern artist of which I know.

Weldon Kees

ARTWARE AND HARDWARE

ART AS THE EVOLUTION OF VISUAL KNOWLEDGE. By Charles Biederman. $15.00.

It is not uncommon these days for individuals to fabricate all-embracing perspectives in support of their own particular solutions. Biederman certainly deserves a medal of some sort—he has taken more space (660 pp.) and contrived more historical distortions than any of his predecessors. It might be added that his style admits of no dialectic; every statement, presented with the utmost pomposity and scant substantiation, is put forward as an incontrovertible fact.

Biederman sets out to demonstrate that we have reached the dawn of a new day for which "Constructionism" comes as the one and only logical expression. In the process of furnishing evidence, he drags us through the entire history of art from the "scratchings of paleolithic man to television"; he smothers us in quotations, takes us miles off the track, and eventually makes it evident that he will elicit any device to further the following thesis: Art was always, from earliest times, a desire to imitate Nature as accurately as possible. Now that we have the camera, this end has suddenly become superfluous, so the artist is up against a grave decision. Biederman *does* concede that color-photography isn't perfect yet (perfection means as clear as a mirror), but it won't be long now, and then no one should ever have an excuse to look a Raphael in the face again. Furthermore, the critic is a ninny who thinks past artists for a moment tried to do anything that a camera couldn't do better today; it was only "regressions," usually brought on by priests, that brought about such fiascos as Byzantine art. Every sculptor after Donatello was also a flop ("Michelangelo and Rodin made the error of using sculpture, their works were actually those of frustrated painters") because sculptors, when it came to downright realism, found they couldn't compete with painting. It would be interesting to ascertain what a visit to Mme. Tussaud's Waxworks might do to this facet of Biederman's visual knowledge.

Such debatable points are as nothing, however, compared to actual

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distortions of fact; the author's attempts to debunk the renaissance architecture of Italy (buildings "literally crawling with sculpture") cruelly demonstrate the hazards of cultural inadequacy. He has jumbled the Renaissance with the later Baroque, for the palaces of Florence and Rome were usually stark and severe (curiously enough, they were later sliced into skyscrapers—rustication and all—by Sullivan, whom Biederman admires extravagantly). A reference to St. Peter's as "Michelangelo's cake of sculpture" is similarly misleading.* On the other hand, if renaissance façades did *not* crawl with sculpture, Biederman's theory of mimetic dominance gets badly thrown off balance.

When we finally stagger into the present period, the author cheers up proportionately as his ill-humor mounts. Here he begins to raise issues, and, like most fanatics, sometimes holds up the lamp of truth to his opponents. We approach the new promised era, and the Biederman theory gathers momentum: Artists had been left in dismay by the invention of the camera. Cézanne had a bright idea, but he should have used *real* cones, spheres, and cylinders, instead of looking for them in Nature. For a while the Cubists did somewhat better, but they failed to realize that paint and canvas *themselves* had become outmoded; (Biederman is so disgusted at their later regressions that he announces it officially—from now on they shall be referred to as the "ex-Cubists"). Léger had the right instinct when he stuck to pipes and tubes, but he flopped because he only *rendered them*—he should have used real ones. So it is that Léger, Miró, Arp, the ex-Cubists, and practically every one else, have been forced to fall in behind Dali, who is now the leader of the "Modernists"—and we are back again with Biederman at his most preposterous. Even Mondrian, who was "in his Cubist days the greatest Cubist of them all," started downhill because he wouldn't forsake his brushes in favor of more contemporary materials.

We have a mammoth build-up for the new "Constructionism" and this time fall upon what is certainly the flabbiest climax of the year. All along the way we have heard artists and writers belabored for not being sufficiently "scientific"; one had been entitled, therefore, to expect some sharp and sparkling analysis, and not merely a series of generalities which read like blurbs for the Non-Objective Museum. "We Constructionists" he informs us, derive from Nature; but he never gets very precise: "If there are any budding Alexanders in the field of art looking for new

* Biederman could easily have found out that Michelangelo is not much in evidence around St. Peter's as we see it today, except for the drum of the dome; the nave and façade were added by Carlo Maderna in the seventeenth century—the sculpture, incrustations, and colonnades by Bernini still later.

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worlds to conquer, we throw into their hands a sphere. Look at it! In it you will see the limits of the new direction; the limits are those of the process-structure of nature!" Nor are we given anything very scientific to justify fifteen pages of depicted Biederman constructions beyond the fact that he is developing an art form that can be mass-produced to fit in every home. It still remains to be explained why any one would rather look at a mass-produced Biederman—judging from these examples—than at a switch-board or a towel-rack.

This brings us to the crux of the matter, which is possibly the most important issue in creative work today—one for which neither science nor the author seem to offer a very searching diagnosis. This is a sense of Quality, which Biederman himself, judging from his caustic comments on the artist's "precious sensibility," would probably be all too glad to disown. I do not think it would take much exposition to show him that there have been other things in art both past and present, aside from the superficial attributes that he discloses. There have also been fine constructions, and will be many more; he may notice too that the other (non-Biederman) examples that he reproduces, comparatively sparsely—Domela, Gorin, Gabo, Vantongerloo—are by no means devoid of "precious sensibility," that they might not respond favorably to mass-production, and perhaps would not seem at home in a hardware-basement.

George L. K. Morris

UNCLE SAM'S NEPHEWS TO CONFUSION

NEW DIRECTIONS 10. Edited by James Laughlin. New Directions. $4.50.

Several respected critics have asserted that American avant-garde writing suffers from the lack of a literary tradition. I can think of no better documentation of their thesis than this anthology. In fact, without recourse to some such theory, it would be impossible to understand the amazing proportion of extraneous agitation in the work of these thirty American writers.

On the positive side, a tradition means rapport with an audience. A writer is prefaced by his tradition, and the reading public is conditioned by it. In this way, a tradition gives the writer a valuable and necessary kind of freedom. Since some things are predicated in his audience's expectation, he can leave them out of his work. He can build cleaner structures; he can create surprise; he can edit or syncopate; he can experiment with silence. In America, instances of this functioning

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of tradition can only be found outside of literature, in the better detective fiction, in our best comedians, in jazz music and bebop, in manufacture. There we have tradition, but in literature, no. And, deprived of this tradition, this rapport, the American avantgarde writer often exhausts himself and his audience in attempting to compensate for it. He over-includes, belabors, explains, and rationalizes. Then, in a sudden revulsion, he defies, attempts to outrage, and aggressively bores his audience in order to show his independence. A tradition is like a composite national ego for writers. Not to have it is to write like a man without an ego, to scatter and sprawl. But contemporary American writers are too self-conscious not to feel this, and their struggle to locate their literary ego clutters their writing.

New Directions 10 opens on a curious irony: the first essay, "America the Beautiful," by Mary McCarthy, contradicts the tone of the whole book. Most of the volume is fiercely anti-nationalist, while this article, subtitled "The Humanist in the Bathtub," is a brilliant bit of home diathermy. A long step ahead of New Direction's cultural lag, Miss McCarthy anticipates the new trend: the American intellectuals finally coming to love the parent country. Like all bright children, they had rebelled against parental influence, or had felt rejected, and had consequently become Marxists, gallophiles, or expatriates. But now, long disillusioned with Russia, bored by Sartre & Co., and impressed, perhaps, by America's role in the war, they've founded a new nationalism. Sophistication eventually laps its own starting points in search of newer, remoter removes. The word "American" is no longer an unequivocal pejorative. Our intellectuals are finally beginning to think of themselves as Americans—with a thousand qualifications, to be sure—but Americans nevertheless.

In any case, there is certainly nothing in the Italian or Peruvian anthologies for us to assimilate. The French poets are infinitely better, but then they're ringers. Michaux, Prévert and Eluard are probably the three best poets writing in France today. All three of them—Michaux and Prévert in their superb irony, and Eluard in his clarity and simplicity—seem to be a healthy antidote to the old Surrealist rickets. However, there are also Julien Gracq and René Char to contend with. M. Gracq is only a slight improvement on the *Surréalistes d'antan,* and M. Char is, if anything, an even more disastrous retrogression.

The Italian poets seem for all the world like men turned out of their houses and cities, beating the bushes for objective correlatives. The Peruvian papayas are pretty soggy. Here's a typical sample: "To die joined to a head of hair that sweeps the bottom of mines of precious

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flames that must be brilliant gas in the hidden nocturne of my love." For awhile I wondered just what sort of function these poems could have for Peruvians. Finally, I concluded that they must be an automatically accepted national custom.

But back to us Americans. In a volume like this one, where American writers are juxtaposed with those of other countries, certain characteristics peculiar to them stand out. One sees, for example, that, by comparison, they are extremely hard-headed and almost obsessively searching. When they essay *les actes gratuites* or sheer Surrealism they're like a bull in a China shop. This is both good and bad: it makes them less fake and pretentious, but it also tends to make them duller. They apparently have not yet emancipated their fantasy to the point where it brings them the maximum returns. (Wallace Stevens and S. J. Perelman are two notable exceptions, not in this volume, who come to mind.)

Literature today is an intensely personal affair for the American avantgarde writer. His old *je m'en foutisme* bit the dust with the death of *View* and *VVV*. Now he takes himself so painfully seriously that he needs an aggressive outlet. He finds this outlet in a displaced criticism of his contemporaries, so that it has become almost a fad, for instance, for the more sophisticated reviewers to disapprove of these New Directions anthologies. In going through this asylum, they realize, like the visitors in Seymour Krim's brilliantly conceived story, "The Hospital," that *they* are the patients. And their rejection of the anthology is an indirect attack on their own obsessions, or, to put it the other way around, a defense against that which is crucially insecure in themselves.

Anatole Broyard

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VARIETY

WHAT IS THE "LIBERAL" MIND?

The twentieth century is the failure of the nineteenth. Hence follow many things through which we are now living, including a rather strange religious revival, or the effort at one, as well as a great variety of attacks from various quarters upon what used to be called the liberal ideology. No doubt, liberalism, being part of the common failure, must come in for its share of the recriminations now hurled so earnestly at our parent century. But, amid the general muddle, there may be some point in observing that liberalism originated with the Enlightenment, that the Enlightenment was not the enthusiasm of a few people thinking by fits and starts but the conscious summation of the secular mind of Europe since the Renaissance, and that our present intellectual reassessment (if we are to have any) ought to start there. Since reaction is being worn this decade, the time may be here for our own reactionary banner with the slogan: Back to the Enlightenment!

All this is only to place a number of questions I should like to bring up apropos of the Correspondence in our last number (PR, February 1949) between Messrs. Arvin, Davis, and Aaron, on the one side, and Mr. Richard Chase, on the other. Though this exchange deals immediately with certain matters of literary interpretation, it obviously raises broader issues that include literature as only one province of their application. These issues have been in the wings now for a long while; it is time they were pushed on stage, perhaps even given a little spotlight too; and we are grateful to the watchful eyes at Smith College for providing the occasion.

Taking off from what looks like an incidental point in Mr. Chase's argument, we find, in fact, that it demonstrates (as clearly as any matter like this can be demonstrated) that the issues take us far beyond the proper sphere of literary criticism. Mr. Chase says that he is unable to see that the question "Was Iago a 'progressive'?" is ludicrous. The confusion of real life and imagination here is so gross that we are reminded of the psychiatrist attempting to psychoanalyze imaginary characters as if they had a real and continuing existence outside the literary work. Iago is a character in a play written before "progressivism" existed, and whatever is true of this imaginary character can be said without any essential reference to the real historical phenomenon we know as liberalism. Did Iago vote for Henry Wallace in the last election? Presumably, Mr. Chase must know, or

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can find out the answer for us. We shall go on next to ask whether Desdemona bought her clothes from Bergdorf Goodman. Time and space become unreal; all times, all places melt together in one contemporaneous, coterminous jelly of a present for Mr. Chase. A fine game perhaps, but once started there is no stopping. If it is silly, Mr. Chase argues, to ask whether Iago was a progressive, then it is also silly to ask whether Othello was a progressive. Precisely; for a moment Mr. Chase seems to get the point, but then proceeds to hope, with a very curious logic, that these two very silly questions will somehow add up to a single sensible one.

The point, however, is not to allow Mr. Chase to parody himself out of existence (however willing he may be to oblige), but to ask what causes him to make this amazing confusion between literature and life, the past and present, the relevant and irrelevant. I suspect that he is in the grip of an *idee fixe*, a very large idea indeed, that obliterates for his mind the boundaries of literary criticism altogether: he is outside literature, outside politics, painfully engaged in groping for a philosophy of life. But, as is now the fashion, he seems to approach the philosophic problem through the literary imagination. But is a philosophy to be arrived at from life or from literature? from the facts about ourselves and our world, or from the desires of the imagination to participate completely in what Mr. Chase calls "the great images of man and his career on earth?" Shall we become Catholics just in order to have the fullest possible appreciation of Dante?

Turning from Mr. Chase's perplexities, we observe in the background the flexible and extended critique of the liberal mind (and liberal imagination) executed by Lionel Trilling over the past decade or so. Mr. Trilling's critique is one from which we have all learned a good deal; but as I reread him I find myself puzzled as to the precise limits at which his criticism might halt. At certain points where Mr. Trilling says "liberalism," could he not just as well say "naturalism" or "pragmatism?" The liberal mind, as we have known it in recent politics, has been the Stalinist or Stalinized mind. (The difference here, perhaps important for manners, is not so great for politics, since under pressure the Stalinized slides over into the Stalinist mind.) Mr. Trilling does not speak of the "Stalinist mind" or "the Stalinized mind" because he is dealing with the fundamental human attitudes behind the political will, and it seems natural that he should prefer a more general term like "liberal." But are not these fundamental attitudes associated (whether validly or not) in the minds of liberals with certain naturalistic and pragmatic beliefs, rather than with the spe-

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cifically political content of liberalism? To bring the question down to cases: Would Mr. Trilling's critique distinguish between, say, Mr. Max Lerner and Mr. Sidney Hook? between Harold Laski and Bertrand Russell? and to what extent would it apply also to the latter? And if the fundamental attitudes of liberalism are the objects of our criticism, ought we not to push our inquiry to its historical source and question the values of the Enlightenment itself?

These doubts were reawakened in me by Mr. Chase's loud cry that the liberals at Smith College were trying to separate him from Dostoevski's Father Zossima. Says Mr. Chase:

"If, in discussing the words of Father Zossima, we are 'as far from liberalism as may be,' then so much the worse for 'liberalism.'"

Mr. Chase apparently wants to be as close as possible to Father Zossima. As readers, participating in a work of the imagination, we may find it hard to keep our distance, since Dostoevski's Elder is, in Mr. Chase's words, "one of the great images of man and his career on earth." But whatever liberalism may be, its values have been rational, secular, and skeptical; Mr. Chase says he wants these values to survive; and he can hardly say this without recognizing that these values do put him, *in life*, at a distance from Father Zossima. If they put him at such a distance that he could not appreciate this

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great character, he would simply be deficient, as a reader, in imagination. Has the criticism of "the liberal imagination" really been directed only at its lack of imagination? In that case, why has so much been made to turn around the word "liberal"? Why not simply "literal" instead of "liberal"? Mr. Chase seems to me here to be confusing literature and life again, and so perpetrating the very error for which "the liberal imagination" has been attacked. He is uneasy at the fact that literature abounds in great images of human life that either express religious ideas directly or were created by the religious imagination. But if this uneasiness becomes so painful that Mr. Chase can no longer endure it, he has to face up to what may prove an equally uncomfortable question: How close can he really get to Father Zossima without becoming a believing Christian?

Which brings us to observe that the word "morality" has a great deal of resonance these days, and a new phrase, "the moral imagination," seems to take an important place in the current critical vocabulary. The phrase does not seem obscure, but, present circumstances being what they are, it could stand some clarification. If "the moral imagination" refers to the novelist's ability to record sensitively the moral conflicts of his characters, how does it differ from what used to be called "psychological insight?" By preaching, imply-

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ing, or whispering a particular morality of its own? But then, what is the content of this morality? In the name of what morality is the "moral imagination" to do its imagining?

It would be a pity if we did not record our deep gratitude to the critics of the liberal mind when the targets they have demolished have been so loud, public, and obnoxious: targets we recognize in the mentality of the now defunct *PM* and of certain contributors to the liberal weeklies. But even where this social service of demolition has been real and necessary, there remain certain important considerations of intellectual economy. How much energy is profitably expended in attacking the degradation of a doctrine? Is it really wise to take *The New Republic* as the residual legatee of the Enlightenment? And, finally, shall we be altogether unjustified if we begin to feel that when so much ammunition is expended on the minor targets the major target itself is indirectly under fire? It is conceivable that we have finished forever with Liberalism and the Enlightenment, that their intellectual values are no longer of use to us; but if so, we should like to know it; and we shall know it only if critics direct their scrutiny to the central attitudes, beliefs, and values involved, rather than to the various peripheral aberrations of these.

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